

# URBAN DESIGN

Madalina Ghibusi  
Federica Marchetti



SPACE

IDENTITY

POLICY

PROGRAM

**ECOLOGIES**  
projects for city environments

  
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## Urban Design Ecologies

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ii inclusive interiors 05



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#05

# **Urban Design Ecologies**

## **Projects for City Environments**

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## ii inclusive interiors Book Series

ii inclusive interiors is a series of studies that – in the attempt to build the foundations of an adaptable environment that meets the need of intercultural dialogue determined by the current phenomena of transnational migration – aims at outlining the most relevant architectural experimentations on collective interiors, in order to highlight the most innovative strategies and tools of “inclusive design” in this regard. In doing that, it collects multidisciplinary critical contributions focusing on the new spaces and architectures that respond to the change of social sphere in a society marked by the intensification of the mobility of people as well as information.

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### **Research Group**

Francesca Berni, Veronica Ferrari, Madalina Ghibusi, Luyi Liu, Federica Marchetti, Gianfranco Orsenigo, Jing Sun

### **Coordination**

Imma Forino, Politecnico di Milano  
Massimo Bruto Randone, POLI.design  
Pierluigi Salvadeo, Politecnico di Milano

### **With the participation of**

Marco Boffi (Università degli Studi di Milano), Alberto Francini (Studio Metrogramma), Tommaso Goisis (Comune di Milano), Paolo Inghilleri (Università degli Studi di Milano), Andrea Minetto (Comune di Milano), Stefano Mirti (IdLab), Erika Noren (IED), Nicolò Ornaghi (Hublab), Nicola Rainisio (Università degli Studi di Milano), Demetrio Scopelliti (Comune di Milano)

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DAStU  
Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano

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Interior Architecture Museums and Built Environment, Research Lab at DAStU,  
Politecnico di Milano

PAUI  
PhD Course in Architectural, Urban and Interior Design, Politecnico di Milano

## Introduction

What does it mean living in an urban environment? Are the cities the product of their inhabitants or are the inhabitants the product of their cities? What are the ingredients for a successful method of planning the urban habitat of tomorrow? These are some of the questions that start building a picture of the practice of today in urban design, planning and management. The different natures of the challenges anticipate the operating system around which the speech of this book is constructed. It both encloses and discloses investigations of the relations between the space, its builders and its users that find themselves in a phase of overwhelming exponential growth of population in the urban habitats. Added to this, the growth is also an intensive one, so the pressure and instability is experienced from micro to macro levels intertwining and exceeding the physical one illustrating how the space is now the product of this tensions, both representing and molding them beyond the physical requirements. This is the trigger that enabled this cross-disciplinary collaboration in the pursue of covering a range of understandings of the urban environments in order to bridge new strategies for the urban tomorrow. Throughout the diversity of points of view, it is still identifiable the common investigation of the relation between actions and space that are each generating and reinforcing the other depending on the contextual premises and evolution in time. Around this principle, the various positions taken by each author intersect, overlap, compete, juxtapose and contrast in a generative formula: the *Urban Design Ecologies*.

The urban system materializes in the form of the city. The limits of the cities are dilating and stretched dynamically but consistently, both physically and in terms of influence on the quality of the life of inhabitants. Global versus local, top-down versus bottom-up, immediate needs versus long term results, public versus private investments: the challenges of

today need a shed of light upon the right proportional balance between these demands that the city deals with. This as well as reaching the right distribution of the amount and speed of the flows of energy, people, information, technology, services and transportation capable of shaping up the life in the city of tomorrow. Furthermore, the present conditions of the space reveal everyday how a personal expression of the architect or urban planner is no longer answering the needs of the hyped-up society solely by itself. Today that recalls a narrowed perspective. The socio-spatial mutations are proving how the places build and enforce their sustainable nature by starting from an open dimension and accumulating influences more and more about the individuals colonizing them rather than about the specialists accountable for their planning and administration. The role of the latter is to rather unriddle, translate and interpret the needs and pleasures of the ones that consume their project, taking a step back and listening rather than promulgating their specialized actions without a certain degree of proneness to a constructive “degradation”. This is how the process of urban planning could engage more and more stakeholders that must be able to enrich the knowledge of the contemporary challenges and aspirations of the transcultural society. In this particular ambit, the intention of Urban Design Ecologies approach is to show how nowadays the boundaries between the disciplines are blurred in a sustainable goal. And this can be seen as an ecological attitude that is emerging in the new century. The inclusive responsibility is a shared goal if we make an attempt toward a more responsive city. Therefore, throughout its content, this book marks, both directly and indirectly, the contributions of several actors that have a role on the urban scene seeking to become a start for a dialogue platform or at least to sparkle interest into such initiatives.

The contemporary condition of the space is no longer confined in the physical realm, but it is tested, altered and proofed by the dynamics of the virtual space, by the overwhelming speed of the innovation cycle, by the continuously changing conditions of the global phenomenon. This reality requires the profession of the architect to be contaminated by the surrounding disciplinary concentric circles, where the center is the ambit of the project as commonly set and accepted by all the stakeholders, from the targeted population to the investors, planners, markets, policy makers and other potentially involved specialists and beneficiaries. This gravitation of the multidisciplinary thoughts is the process that relates to the background of the Urban Design Ecologies strategy proposed in this publication. In the book the discourse is articulated around four main

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“pillars” Space, Identity, Policy and Program, that are also used and referred to as “factors” or “operational perspectives” throughout the language of the Urban Design Ecologies approach. Their role inside this book is to organize like some magnets that attract a series of points of view upon the contemporary urban condition underlining the cross-disciplinarity of the design process that defines the current practice in the urban field.

The debate starts with setting the framework of the Urban Design Ecologies speech by defining and explaining the strategical approach and the terminology, and then presenting some case studies of the strategy applied in the educational field to show how it can be interpreted and applied on different levels of culture and specialization. Afterwards, presenting theoretical and historical precedent is what supports furthermore the understanding of the general framework. Then the speech opens toward the desired debate upon the environment of the city and so the heterogenous interpretations are clustered around the above-mentioned “pillars”. Moreover, the interviews that mark the end of each section are articulating commenters and practitioners, enriching the spectrum of viewpoints and emphasizing again on how architecture is part of a wider mechanism.

The Space section starts with addressing the questions of the contemporary space in the form of a rhythmic succession of keywords reciprocally validated as a result of accumulations and intersections of concepts and phenomena that are common throughout the other pillars and so, essentially, overall, generate the *space*. Subsequently, the following chapters stress more on the “slowness” as the pulse of the growing city through the natural system as a slow urban infrastructure and the use of slow mobility like the bicycles that consequently have added results in the overall benefits for the city and inhabitants, in terms of health and experience. The interview with the renowned architect Stefano Boeri presents a scenario developed on the re-use of abandoned areas in the city of Milan based on the same structuralizing concepts: slowness, nature, reforestation, density, re-use.

The discourse of the Identity section is centered around psychosocial issues of the urban environment that have a direct impact on the citizens. The concepts are meant to coagulate some tactical actions to deal with the potentially negative consequences that the urban settlements project on the people and that are noticeable in their behavior as rather passive actors on the stage of the city. Tools risen from the field of environmental

psychology focus on how participative behavior is fundamental in a healthy functioning of the city overall and it can be stimulated throughout several initiatives developed around the concepts of wellbeing, experience and enjoyment, place identity and attachment, sense of place and sense of community, and, nonetheless the basic joy of play. The intention of the relatively topical sections is to reframe both the challenges and achievements of nowadays and to recast them in the light of Urban Design Ecologies.

The Policy section frames the importance of the urban policies as tools that should be integrated in the design process to allow new social interactions in the urban environment. Starting from the ambiguities inside urban transformation – and considering bottom-up and/or top-down approaches – policies can assume a relevant role, allowing feedback during the process and directing the next phases. This is a peculiarity of our time, looking at the mutable aspects of the city space, the stakeholders involved and the expectations of the inhabitants. The best result is obtained when fluidity and awareness in the interaction between designers, clients, institutions and people allow them to pursue final collective scopes.

In the end, the Program section underlines how the activities in the urban space are the element that relate space with the identity of the inhabitants. In the contemporary city, new networks and communities can develop uses, initiatives and innovative projects, activating the public domain thanks to creativity, collaboration and shared knowledge. Co-design and co-creation become important instruments to elaborate common uses, rules and visions. In this scenario, the inhabitants are not just spectators, but active participants in the satisfaction of their requirements and needs. It is a new perspective to fill the lack of unused and unattractive places that are spread around our cities.

The combination of all these elements can generate qualities in the city environment. The integration of the aspects creates a complex system that differentiates itself from an unsolvable and complicated structure.

This system can give new meanings to the urban space thanks to its ability to link different fields. It contributes to determine the “sense of the place”, working on various levels of the urban transformation and thanks to the analysis of all the issues related to the city. This global vision influences the future city livability taking into account transversal aspects: architectures and urban spaces are more connected to uses and activities, stakeholders and the management of the city increase the possibilities to take into action their needs, people can develop more awareness according to this new situation in the city that they have contributed to produce.

In conclusion, the contemporary city, produced by the interrelation of the four *ecologies*, appears more and more inclusive, livable and shared. The complexity factor, considered at the beginning of the design process, allows the designers and other actors to find new open solutions for the general quality of the lifestyle of the people. This approach, for the fact that it is cross-disciplinary, influences a large sphere of issues giving new sense to the complexity, avoiding unwanted results. In this way, ambiguities and contradictions become opportunities instead of problems, producing innovative ways to inhabit the city space.

For all these reasons, the aim of this book is properly to trace and define topics about these new possibilities, describing and envisioning – through argumentations and examples – how the city is and could become.

MG, FM





**URBAN  
DESIGN**

**ECOLOGIES**



## Urban Design Ecologies An Initial Toolkit for the Open Social Design Environment

Massimo Bruto Randone, Irina Suteu

The future of our world will not ultimately depend on technological innovation or on the global economy. It will be the outcome of what we, the people – the urban people – do about it, through our projects and through our conflicts. The missing link between environmental sustainability and social organization, is the relationship of urban communities to their environment. (Castells 2000, xi)

The beginning of the new millennium marks an important extension of the participative and social dimensions of the bottom-up multidisciplinary initiatives generated in the urban context. This is due to the increasingly connected communication, which triggered the awareness on the new possible relationship between the problematic growing of demographical density in the cities, and is linked with the scarcity of the resources to systematically respond the urban needs. In contrast, we witness an increased *human, social and cultural* distributed capital, suddenly made available in a new interconnected and engageable society.

The following chapter takes in consideration the above-mentioned inter-related factors and introduces the *Urban Design Ecologies* approach, as an observation and design toolkit able to capture the changing openness of the relational context in the cities. The toolkit is based on four operational perspectives: *Space, Identity, Policy and Program*. These perspectives, have the purposes to explore the importance of designing *In* and *With* the social city, and will be described and tested more in detail later on in the chapters of the book.

The main questions the Urban Design Ecologies approach aims to address are:

- how to define a design toolkit able to collect and coordinate most of the urban stakeholders visions, capabilities and engagement, in overlapping consensus, with the city development;
- how to raise the awareness on political opportunities, emerging from the engagement of the citizens in the social and cultural projects in city;
- how to activate integrated participative processes to improve the livability in the city and stimulate an active design citizenship.

The development of the urban environment has been extensively studied in the last decades, generating important discussions on the challenges raised by its unprecedented growth. This accelerated rate of urbanization, sets up a confrontation between the economic development agenda of the city governments, and the quality of life of the citizens living in the city setting up sustainable development concerns (Dempsey et al. 2011; Evans 2002; Godshalk 2004). In particular D.R. Godshalk outlines the importance of social sustainability in aligning *resources*, *development* and *properties* attributes of sustainable development in urban planning, proposed earlier by Scott Campbell (1996). Godshalks points out the frictions emerging in negotiating the above-mentioned elements, and introduces the notion of *Livability*.

Livability in the city public space is also one of the main concerns of the theoretical research and urban design projects of Jan Gehl (Gehl 2011; Gehl and Svarre 2013) that advocates the integration of the social factors in the design and functionality of public spaces. As Jan Gehl argues, “The core of the matter is to get the large volumes of life in public spaces to function in a way that allows daily life to take place under decent conditions and partner with the physical framework instead of fighting against it” (Gehl and Svarre 2013, 3). In the same time, attempting to reconcile the different facets of social sustainability, Vallance organizes the previous theoretical insights coming from urban planning and social science in three categories:

- Development social sustainability: concerned with the basic needs, social capital, justice, equity and ethical values;
- Bridge sustainability: concerning changes in behavior aiming to achieve environmental goals;
- Maintenance sustainability: referring to the preservation and resilience in face of change, and the way in which citizens react (embrace or resist those changes) (Vallance et al. 2011).

The later category of social maintenance sustainability has also been given increased attention in the design for social innovation literature and projects, and in the study of resilient communities by Ezio Manzini (2015). The above references indicate a raising interest for a deeper dimension of the city, one in which the urban identity(s) are shaped by the citizen participation in defining the city from the social design perspective. This dimension collects the multitude of conditions that surround the people living in the city, develops in parallel with the built architectural scene and has a strong impact on the livability in the urban areas.

In the present publication we suggest and test that these social intangible layers, symbiotically overlapped with the tangible layers of the “traditional” city (Marcuse 2002), constitute a unique constant changing context, made by *different kinds of cultural environments* (Hall 2004). These environments are defined by three main characteristics: are open – allow influences and optimize alterations; *social* – concern a political understanding of the city and its part as common precious good; are hungry of *design* – should be re-shaped and re-interpreted through coordinated bottom-up initiatives and addressed through top-down sustain.

### **The city as an *Open Social Design Environment***

The approach we present in this text aims to focus and investigate the living layer of the city as a multi-dimensional concept; for this reason the notion of Environment is not related only to the geographic surroundings or coordinates, but indicates the domain in which spatial, sociological and cultural conditions converge to define and design the city as a livable organism. This interpretation of the Environment, helps drafting several dimensions that concern the network of actors, stakeholders and behaviors; the relational value between the interactions and the speed of changes; the ways of expression of the attachment to the city; the levels of participation and engagement and the political transformative value of this engagement; the creativity manifested by the citizens and the “hunger” to re-interpret the city meanings through design actions.

In this sense we look at the relations that emerge between the different cultural groups and the territory in which they live, their affective attachment to it and the consequences of the interactions between people and space. In the same time, by focusing on the Environment, we aim to reveal and analyze the aggregated behaviors of the citizens in the public space, the generated social norms and how they change in time as well as the way in which people come together for specific actions, organizing spontaneously or according to a program. These social features generate a

sum of cultural habits expressed in actions and events and communicated through a multitude of media – that range from spoken agreements, word of mouth news, written literatures, or visual indications. The goal of defining the Environment in this extended dimension is to better frame the identity of the specific urban areas, and create the conditions for a thorough approach to the design project.

### ***Open Environment: Actors and relations***

The Environment is intended as the multitude of conditions that surround the people living in the city, and has the dual potential of containing the human activities and being altered and designed through activity. The Space dimension, the architecture dimension we would say, is though the primarily *visible* condition that holds together an intricate and less tangible tissue of additional connections between the inhabitants (individuals and/or communities) and their environments. So, urban environments which are deeply defined by the relations among physical places, and the facts and actions that the Space dimension hosts and makes happen, are the tangible and intangible merging opportunities that create a different type of city. This kind of city, as Charles Landry explains

(...) requires, instead, a combination of both hard and soft infrastructures. Soft infrastructure includes paying attention to how people can meet, exchange ideas and network. It shifts focus and encourages physical developments and place-making or urban design that foster communication between people. These places have high levels of amenity and quality. (Landry 2012, xxiii)

To capture these relationships, we use the term Open as a way to both convey the perceived unity of the city, and suggest its malleability, that allows its interpretation and permanent re-shaping. Moreover, since the ongoing changes in the cities life are technologically accelerated by always-on urban attitude that brings together, in an almost seamless manner, the *real* and *virtual* encounters, stretching-out the definition of Space and Public Space. People living in the always-connected-cities have therefore unprecedented access to the public sphere in which they can collect their needs, share their wishes and express their visions, while being integral part of the public life inside the social environment.

### ***Social Environment: Expressing and enabling***

The above-mentioned accessibility opens a new dimension of the city as a Social Environment. In the context of this publication we look at the connections that emerge in this extended dimension of the Social Environment as triggers for the re-interpretation of public spaces and the discovery of un-used or un-seen spaces in the city, which gain new meanings through activities in time.

We argue that the re-evaluation of this kind of reclaimed spaces may also become political opportunities for the communities of citizens (Abbot 2013) and (hopefully) can generate creative negotiations for new and dedicated urban space policies. This concentrates the attention on the social and political assets of the active citizens, bringing forward the importance of social capital. In the opinion of Robert Putnam: “(...) trust, norms, and networks, tend to be self reinforcing and cumulative. Successful collaboration in one endeavor builds connections and trust – social assets that facilitate future collaboration in other, unrelated tasks. As with conventional capital, those who have social capital tend to accumulate more” (Putnam 1993, 4).

More than an observation tool, the Urban Design Ecologies kit has also the potential to focus the attention of the active citizens organizations and the policy makers on the importance of the human and social capital for the co-designed livability of the city. The notion of livability expresses therefore the values of the social means as well as the social purposes searching for a real social impact. Moreover, the multifaceted dimensions of the Urban Design Ecologies approach enables a hybrid top-down/bottom-up creative dialog, strongly connected with a wide social sustainability engagement.

### ***Design Environment: Planning and playing, strategically***

Many of society's materials, spaces and buildings are unused, discarded and unwanted. Old buildings and factories remain fallow for years, acting as a drain on local communities both financially and emotionally. The trick is to see these spaces and buildings in a more positive light, as resources, assets and opportunities for social innovation. Assets can be reclaimed and reused and, in the process, environments can be revitalised, social needs can be met, and communities energised. (Murray, Caulier-Grice and Mulgan 2011, 36)

The quote above helps introduce the creative dimension of the city, a layer in which the non-conformity and lack of plan of the built space become “assets and opportunities”. The Design Environment delineates the sum of innovative transformations of the tangible and intangible social layer, bringing forward the creative “hunger” of the local communities. The Design Environment aims to capture the project ideas and points out the necessity of a systematic collection and organization of the design initiatives integrated with the project of the built architectural space. More than trying to channel the bottom-up design driven eagerness and capacity to design, the Design Environment indicates a domain in which the young generation of architects and urban designers team-up with citizens and policy makers to co-design a livable city.

The need to pay attention and *listen* to peoples continuing changing perception of space in time, is best depicted by Kevin Lynch. He draws attention on the way in which people construct their image of the world with data and information from their senses, and as he argues,

By presenting these data in novel patterns, artistic inventions alter our sensibilities – change what we see and therefore how we conceive the world and again how we look at it. (...) there are novel temporal manipulations of the environment that will not only delight us but also vivify our image of time – help us heal the breach between the abstract intellectual concept and our emotional sense of it. (Lynch 1972, 163)

The Design Environment energizes the notion of space, adding the temporal dimension of the urban design project in which a strategic “plan and play” process evolves, including all the actors in a search for sustainable solutions for the city.

### **Livability: An emerging goal for the *Open Social Design Environment***

Cities have one crucial resource – their people. Human cleverness, desires, motivations, imagination and creativity are replacing location, natural resources and market access as urban resources. (Landry 2012, xii)

The notion of Open Social Design Environment offers an interpretation of the urban context as the theater of constant living changes. These changes include the capillary shifts in the behavior of the city inhabitants that come as a reaction to a certain urban anomie, and mark previously unforeseen alternative functions and uses of a given space. The public space is continuously modified by the participating citizens who take hold of it

re-interpreting its uses through community driven actions. The different actions in time and in various locations have the potential to motivate the citizen participation and adoption of the frequented public space. The constant engagement of the citizens in the re-definition of the public space, which they temporary but continuously inhabit, brings a sense of belonging and, in long term, increases the livability of the urban areas.

As written before, the term Livability indicates the quality of life and the well-being of the city and is determined also by the human interactions, the amount of time spent in public spaces and the quality of the actions experienced (Gehl 2011). In this sense we can contextualize the concept of urban livability at the cultural intersection between *Public Space*, *Public Time* and *Public Actions*.

*Public Space.* By framing the city as an Open Social Design Environment, we intended to test the expanded dimension of space and public space in relation with the social life, in which, as Karsten Harries suggests,

The accident of place no longer determines the job we are going to take, who our friends are going to be, where are we going to shop, and so on. Undoubtedly this has to mean the breakdown of neighborhoods in the traditional sense. But this breakdown need not to be deplored: the diminished power of place, a consequence of technological advances that allow the individual to participate in an ever-increasing number of groups and subcultures may be taken as an index of modern, civilized living. (Harries 2000, 172)

In contrast with Harries who sees the “diminished power of place” as a negative impact of technology, we suggest that the contemporary cities present an “up-graded power of place” that opens new kinds of uses of the spaces as well as integrated opportunities for sociality. In the contemporary urban habitat the concept of Public Space is becoming a combination between planned places (and functions) and unplanned local and temporary re-interpretations of these places (and uses). Formally thinking, shifting from the idea of *planned-functions* into the option of *allowed-uses*, means replacing the notion of a geometrical selected taxonomy with a user generated geography. This combination gives birth to different new levels of social and relational local space commitment, a sort of responsible nemesis to the “Not In My Back Yard” acritical attitude. At city scale it also generates a network of non-conventional places, un-intended social spaces (sometimes somewhere not-yet legal places) that altogether become temporary Public Spaces that improve the local livability.

*Public Time.* The urban environment conceals many time schedules. The daily activities are usually split among functional time, leisure time, discovery time, challenge time, engagement time and so on. In the context of the Open Social Design Environment framework, the Engagement Time represents the community driven actions and attitude of being part in the city life and taking care of a specific loved urban area. Engagement Time is thus the *currency* of this shared economy system and the measure of the amount of resources and capabilities people exchange in specific collaborative contexts.

Moreover, inside the contemporary urban political dimension the Engagement Time represents a slot of individual and community life offered for a meaningful dialog among citizens, policy makers and design experts, to co-design the spaces to which they are emotionally attached. In this sense the Public Time can also be seen as a channel for communicating meaningful collective experiences that may lead to the creation of long-term engaged communities through temporary encounters. From this perspective the Public Time, with its multifaceted dimensions, connects the policy makers and active citizens in a mutual listening training, that helps align the galaxy of stakeholders expectations with a global visions for an addressed city development.

*Public Action.* The expression of citizen engagement in the public space is manifested in the first instance in Public Actions, that can be spontaneous or scheduled, allowed, tolerated or prevented. These actions are closely linked to the site conditions and the time users availability, and their observation can lead to the identification of significant social ties in well defined communities. Public Action, when is not a destructive abuse, may become an addressed and coordinated pillar for envisioning the common good in a community. These events, hosted in public spaces, are temporary and/or itinerant, and generally happen in places that weren't dedicated for this purpose. This type of un-structured actions, have the potential to allow the temporary social testing conjunction (and hopefully inclusion) of different cultural groups. By participating in Public Actions, quite any public actions, the members of a given community may reach a certain level of acknowledgement and consensus that otherwise lacks in the daily, isolated routine.

When the aggregated actions in a territory become more structured longer-term activities, they have the potential to leave the imprint on the social, psychological and even physical space. In this sense the transformation of isolated actions in activities collected and scheduled in shared programs, are strongly dependent on, and determined by, the public time dimension.



This shift towards programed activities, combining enthusiasms and capabilities, becomes the motivation for engaging effective and creative conversations. The dialog between the citizens and policy makers occurs in different moments, in which bottom-up initiatives supported by collective actions find support from top-down rules and norms promoted by institutional agencies (Briggs 2008).

The notions of Public Spaces, Public Times and Public Actions advance the hypothesis of the city as Open Social Design Environment and introduce a new perspective on the *Urban Livability*. Such important opportunity to reclaim the quality of life in the city is difficult to achieve, and requires a design approach to be thought, activated and maintained. For this purpose we identify an operational toolkit that can support its systematic analysis and design.

**Space, Identity, Policy and Program: Identifying operational toolkit factors for the Open Social Design Environment**

The phrases “human capital”, “social capital” and “cultural capital” are glibly spoken. These represent concepts about real and powerful assets, more indispensable for wealth creation and well-being in modern societies than traditional bankable capital – but difficult or impossible to handle in traditional accounting terms. (Jacobs 2004, 134)

Having analysed the contemporary dimension of the city as an Open Social Design Environment, made by main public elements like Public Space, Public Time and Public Action, and underlined the role of the Livability notion, as an emerging goal of our inquiry, we now introduce Space, Identity, Policy and Program. These four operational factors enable the initial analysis and design of the Urban Livability and complete the description of the Urban Design Ecologies approach.

URBAN DESIGN ECOLOGIES MATRIX					
DEFINING URBAN FEATURES		COMBINING OPERATIONAL PROJECT FACTORS			
OPEN SOCIAL DESIGN ENVIRONMENT	Urban Livability	Public	Space	Where	SPACE
			Action	Who	IDENTITY
				How	POLICY
				What	PROGRAM
			Time	When	

The four operational factors we selected are both analytical tools, that improve the understanding and the dialog with a variety of actors and stakeholders coming from different backgrounds and bringing a different set of needs wishes and visions, and design tools that enable multidisciplinary project hypothesis, and are capable to absorb and regenerate the mutations in public spaces through the activities they host, or could host.

The Space, Identity, Policy and Program factors, we identified among others possible multidisciplinary perspectives, don't have the ambitions to solve the whole urban design complexity, but aim to open a wide and inclusive design conversation about urban livability, and the notion of collective inclusive well- being, resetting the roles and rules that are shaping the contemporary city.

### **Toolkit description: Roles and rules**

The present design toolkit was born inside four Architecture and Urban Design international masters and PhD workshops, run in Hong Kong and Milano in the last three years.<sup>1</sup> For this reason the following brief and practical descriptions refer to the specific design backgrounds and educational needs of the universities in which the courses were organized, and are simple enough to be quickly applied in completely different cultural contexts.

*Space Factor.* Refers to the macro-category that traditionally involves urban planning, architecture, interior and temporary structures studies. Space factor focuses on the physical realm and includes permanently built structures as well as temporary or not-yet-legal places; rethought occupied or wished places that generate a combination of physical structures and

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1 – MDes (Urban Environments Design), School of Design, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong , 2015-2017, Master Studios co-taught with Timothy Jachna and Alvin Yip, with the support of Cees de Bont, Scarlet Pong, Jason Hilgefert, Lily Shen, April Liu.

- Urban Vision & Architectural Design, Domus Academy, Milan, 2015-2017, Master Mentorships, co-taught with Paolo Inghilleri, Nicola Boffi, Marco Rainisio, with the support of Elisa Poli, Andrea Boschetti, Arianna Piva, Giada Evandri, Cristina Perillo.

- Architecture Urban and Interior Design, Politecnico di Milano, Milan, 2016-17, PhD Workshop co-taught with Pierluigi Salvadeo, Imma Forino, Paolo Inghilleri, Nicola Boffi, Marco Rainisio, with the support of Chiara Bisconti, Alberto Francini, Tommaso Goisis, Andrea Minetto, Erika Noren, Nicolò Ornaghi, Demetrio Scopelliti.

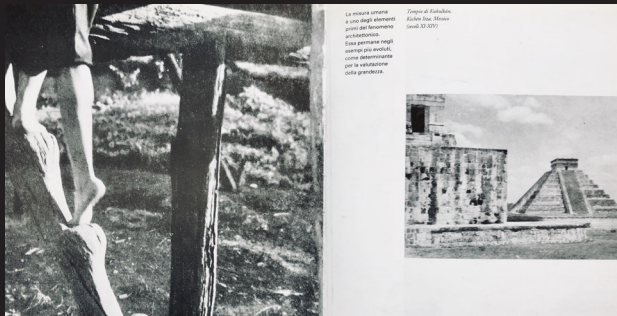
voids; any 3D potential conditions. It takes in consideration theories, methodologies, heritages, toolkits, case studies, best practices, technical innovations and compositions that have the aim to build the physical environment of the city.

*Identity Factor.* Refers to the existing or engageable motivation of the *citizens* to search for shared meanings for the city they inhabit. The term citizen is understood as a wide notion, and includes individuals, groups or communities developing a sense of belonging. These structured or unstructured, temporary or consolidated communities, should be discovered, selected and motivated for working together with the policymakers and the design experts to constantly frame and re-frame the malleable social identity(s) of *their* city. Far from being a linear process, the Identity factor indicates the necessity of a cycle in which engaged citizens participate in the definition of the urban design strategies, from the idea generation, to the final implementation, up to the follow up maintenance of the urban interventions.

*Policy Factor.* Refers to the inclusive creative and practical negotiation process in complex societies, where needs and wishes are shared, competences distributed, where economies are fragile and visions are potentially conflicting. Policy factor is seen as a social innovation design tool that allows things happen: mapping the possible stakeholders networks, identifying partnerships and beneficiaries, enabling a meaningful dialog and alliances among city players, promoting the communities engagement, managing risks and volatile consensus, controlling the whole development processes and driving the strategic relations and interactions to the final execution. The relevance of the Policy factor in the urban development is directly proportional to the distribution of the stakeholders urban power.

*Program Factor.* Refers to the palimpsest of urban happenings, a dense and meaningful system of strategic activities events and opportunities, designed and coordinated in all active communities of interest. *Program* is an operational factor that becomes a key performance indicator of the notion of *urban attractiveness*, a strategic parameter of the cultural competition among the biggest international macro-city, in terms of political vision, local and international connections, stakeholders network commitment. In our project context we identified the key pillars of the Program effectiveness as follows: Space: where urban opportunity get stage; Time: when urban life express its needs and wishes; Players: which build up the malleability and permeability of the city as an Open Social and increasingly Design driven environment.

*In 1958, Ernesto Nathan Rogers published *Esperienze dell'Architettura* (Architectural Experiences). Beside the textual chapters, is edited an internal collateral book made by a corpus of few high selected pictures. Collected in single or double pages, images are bonded together with a framing caption-note, searching deep design meaning among complexity.*



*In 1965 i Joseph Kosuth produces *One and Three Chairs*.; Kosuth didn't make the chair, take the photograph, or write the definition; he selected and assembled them together. But is this art? And which representation of the chair is most "accurate"? These open-ended questions are exactly what Kosuth wanted us to think about when he said that "art is making meaning."*



*Selecting images, assembling representations, exploring new meanings, opening debates about art and design complex realm. All these thoughts in action indicate the Urban Design Ecologies approach: a conceptual creative environment, activated by urban design agents, enabling facts, theories and visions.*

## Conclusion

The chapter herein introduced the preliminary reflections on the results of several didactical experiences placed in different cultural and geographical contexts. In these occasions the authors had the opportunity to test the starting hypothesis that the ongoing changes in the space, identity, policy and program layers of the city need to be addressed from multiple disciplinary perspectives and described in a meaningful vision narration. The Urban Design Ecologies approach proposes an initial set of concepts and tools, with the objective of empowering the young generation of architects, urban planners and social designers to actively participate in all phases of the urban decision-making process. This process starts with the interception of the distributed potential common ideas, involves the widest and most appropriated networks of stakeholders and policymakers, and ends with taking care of the applied specific results. The challenge of the co-authored Urban Design Ecologies research is to explore and verify the urban multi-disciplinary design approach, and its ambition is to improve a design platform dedicated to the comprehension and development of the notion of livability in the contemporary urban Open Social Design Environment.



## Urban Design Ecologies The Hong Kong/China Experience

Timothy Jachna

### Background

This chapter discusses lessons learned and experiences gathered from the application of the *Urban Design Ecologies* approach within two seven-week studio subjects in the Master of Design (MDes) in Urban Environments Design programme at the School of Design of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, in 2016 and 2017. The studios were co-taught by Massimo Randone and Tim Jachna (accompanied by Alvin Yip in the first of the two years), with around twelve students in each cohort. The students were for the most part from the Chinese mainland, with two foreigners in each of the two years and two Hong Kong students in the 2016 iteration).

In both instances, the studios dealt with urban districts in a process of change – “zones in transition” in the parlance of urban sociology (Preston 1966) – in Hong Kong and Shenzhen, respectively. The Urban Design Ecologies approach was applied to gain an understanding of the current state of urban transition, to envision possible and desirable developmental trajectories for these districts and to propose steps toward realizing these futures. Each of the studios was structured in two phases: a research phase in which students were divided into four groups, each of which probed the district, through primary and secondary research, to gain a quick understanding of one of the four “pillars” that underlie the Urban Design Ecologies approach (*Space, Policy, Program, Identity*), followed by a concept/design phase in which students were regrouped to develop conceptual proposals for interventions into the district under study.

In 2016, we investigated the district of Fotan, a former industrial area of Hong Kong that had rapidly changed as industries moved across the border into the Chinese mainland, with its cheaper land and labour, after the 1997 handover of Hong Kong from Britain back to China. The large open industrial spaces of the district offer welcoming spaces for artists, artisans, designers and other broadly-defined creative practitioners, who have since colonized these spaces over the past twenty years, remaining however largely informal and even invisible. Development pressure is calling into question the future of this community and these activities.

In 2017, we worked on Nantou, one of hundreds of formerly rural settlements that had become “urban villages” as they were swallowed up by Shenzhen in the course of its rapid expansion, during which villagers had replaced their single-story village houses with multi-story concrete structures within the same footprint to multiply the area and value, typically renting space to members of the huge influx of migrant workers who were and are the engines of Shenzhen’s skyrocketing construction and manufacturing productivity. More recently, Nantou has become popular among students and young members of the emerging “creative class”. As of this writing, Nantou is the site of this year’s Biennale of Urbanism, Art and Architecture, which is intended as a catalyst in the formal development of Nantou village as a “creative district” within Shenzhen.

For both of the studios, we relied on insights, access and inspiration provided by “insiders” with a stake and influence on the process of transition being undergone by the district. In the case of Fotan, we worked with District Councilor Scarlett Pong, who is a strong and active advocate for development of the district in a way that does not supplant existing buildings and communities with generic “Hong Kong model” mixed-use development as typical in the city, but rather draws on the qualities of the existing building stock and urban morphology, and especially the community of artists, designers and other “creatives” who have colonized the industrial buildings since the withdrawal of industry. In the case of Nantou, we relied on Jason Hilgefort of Future+ / Shenzhen Design Centre for providing behind-the-scenes insight into the plans for the Biennale and access to the architects and government officials involved in its planning.

## **Versus**

The Urban Design Ecologies approach is rooted in an understanding of the city that diverges from conventional planning practice in both mainland China and Hong Kong, both of which have a strong



technocratic predilection and which have favoured *tabula rasa* approaches to urbanization, in which existing structures, communities, livelihoods and practices are routinely erased, rural land expropriated, hills levelled and land “reclaimed” from the ocean to create blank slates for from-the-ground-up construction of new districts. Urban “development” is understood as the wholesale superseding and supplanting of the existing with the new, not the evolution of existing structures.

While certain types of historic buildings, where present, may be preserved to provide a “heritage” atmosphere for tourism, entertainment districts or chic living or working environments, or razed/gutted and reinstated in the form of facadist simulacra, as in the treatment of Hong Kong’s Graham Street or Wanchai Market, these are typically integrated merely as cosmetic tokens. The Urban Design Ecologies perspective, on the other hand, understands heritage not in terms of the museumification of artefacts from the past, but rather in terms of understanding the present as embedded in an ongoing developmental narrative from which can be drawn a wealth of knowledge and insights of crucial relevance to the present and future.

At present, the governance, planning and development models used in conventional approaches are top-down and policy driven. Their strategic focus is the maximization of economic advantage and developer gains, rather than the nurturing of creative ecologies from a local and vibrant cultural resource point of view to achieve gains of a civic nature at the local or district levels. Existing approaches tend to utilise spaces that have been largely emptied of function and corresponding population, rather than achieving synergy between existing industrial and cultural assets and new creative enterprises. These approaches tend to be conceived from the policy and economic perspective, without much detailed focus on the role of the built environment in this transformation or critical interrogation of the potential for innovation in urban design for creative districts.

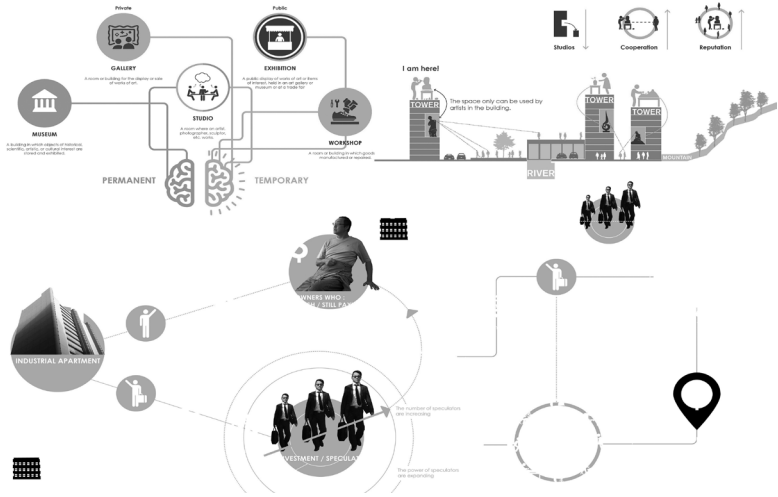
The Urban Design Ecologies approach can be seen as providing a template for exploring the “performative turn” in urbanism, the understanding of cities as processes of human actions and interactions, including but transcending the spatial and material datum on which architecture and urban design typically focus, and it is this perspective that we brought to bear against the background of the materialistic, profit-driven, command-and-control regimes of planning that currently hold sway over these urban areas.



## Creative districts

Both of the studios sought strategies for encouraging the sustainable development of districts driven by what might be termed the “creative industries”, which have been gaining attention as the engines of “creative city” development worldwide (Florida 2005; Landry and Bianchini 1995). A distinction should be made, though, between our approach and the approach that underlies the spate of “creative districts” or “cultural districts” being founded in many Chinese cities, as elsewhere, which can take the form of gentrification.

Critics of the so-called “creative city approach” point out that the “creative cities” concept is often used to mask gentrification initiatives that drive out or marginalise existing residents of a district (Markusen and Schrock 2006) as the newer creative industries and members of the “creative classes” move in, creating what is in effect a mono-cultural development (Mercer 2004). The creative city concepts as adopted by policy makers often lack



sufficient study on what vital preconditions or bottom-up factors are necessary for generating creativity in a city, what creative activities can be fostered, and how this depends on the specific local conditions and on social, cultural, economic and physical factors.

These two studios, and the Urban Design Ecologies approach in general, begin with a more fundamental and inclusive understanding of what constitutes creativity in urban societies, in seeking to understand and draw out the creative potential of existing communities and practices, while also admitting the need to interweave these with the incursion of new communities and creative practices as the urban district evolves. “Culture led” development often means government-led, and in the Hong Kong context this has typically meant urban development organised around venues for organised, sanctioned (and typically well-established, mainstream and foreign) art and culture that ignores local grassroots culture and artists, as exemplified par excellence in Hong Kong’s new West Kowloon development.

While wanting to remain clearly distinct from such approaches, in the Chinese and Hong Kong context, the pivotal role of government in any urban initiative is inescapable. Both of the studios were able to take root because of an opportunity provided by interest or initiative of individuals or bodies within the local municipal government.

### **The studio experience**

Both of the studios took similar paths, in terms of the development of students’ attitudes and awareness. At the outset, we found ourselves at times having to block students’ desires to jump straight to design ideas, not immediately understanding the relevance of studying what seemed to them as intangible and non-design-related aspects of the current situation. It was always initially the most difficult to convince any of the groups of students to take on the “policy” pillar, which was perceived as the most abstract and the furthest from what they saw as relevant to their studies as spatial designers, even though in both iterations of the studio the policy angle was the source of some of the most incisive and pivotal elements of both the insights gained from the research and the ideas generated in the proposals.

In the Nantou project in particular, students arrived at a point where they became so enamored of the existing community in the village that several expressed an unwillingness to propose any changes at all, and indeed began to consider measures for preserving the current state from any

further changes, in particular from the incursion of the “creative classes” who were perceived almost like an invasive species. This led to a discussion regarding the viability, or desirability, of halting the evolution of a place, especially a district that had been in a constant state of flux in terms of its demographics, livelihood and physical structures for the past several decades, and whether, rather than assuming that any change will inevitably lead to a loss of what is valuable in the present situation, we might see in the Urban Design Ecologies approach a way of understanding the internal dynamics of the situation and working with stakeholders and resources to consciously design and work towards a desirable future state that uses existing values as the foundations and catalysts for what might constitute desirable futures for these places.

The broad focus of the Urban Design Ecologies approach is not intended to denigrate the importance of spatiality and materiality. Indeed, students were encouraged to not forget their role as spatial designers. This approach deepened the understanding of the interplay between physical building typology (and urban morphology) and the development of program, policy and identity. Fotan’s building stock is characterised by a Hong Kong high-rise industrial building type, with multiple high, open stories of factory and warehouse space stacked on top of a podium with a ground floor of retail and an upper floor of loading docks reached by ramps from the street. The building stock of Nantou is more fine-grained on a village scale, with a handful of surviving centuries-old historical buildings but mostly consisting of buildings from the past three decades. In both studios, the specific physical texture of the place gave form and structure to the understanding and expression of possibilities in policy, program and identity.

A particular strength of the Urban Design Ecologies methodology is that the work done by the various groups of students could be understood as mutually *completing* rather than *competing* with one another. The work of the different groups could be seen as different perspectives on a communal vision of a possible future, intertwining with one another, and all rooted in the common base of knowledge and understanding co-constructed by the students at the outset of the studio. And in the course of the project, the students gained an appreciation for the inextricableness of the interconnections among the four pillars, as it was revealed how program, space, policy and identity were constantly mutually forming one another. Particular (space) typologies had been appropriated or adapted for new activities (program) by new groups of people to manifest an evolving way of life and expression (identity), in negotiation with the rules that frame the place (policy).

## In place of planning?

The Urban Design Ecologies approach is an evolutionary rather than revolutionary angle on the city that takes what is there not as something to be superseded but rather as the raw material out of which the next will be formed. As a pedagogical strategy, this approach offers a way of effectively obliterating the fiction of the *tabula rasa*. Taking this approach to heart, it is not possible to look at an urban district and see a “blank sheet”.

In his “incomplete urbanism” thesis, William Lim (2012) refers specifically to contemporary Asian cities to express the inadequacy of urban planning to encompass the many facets involved in urban growth and transformation. Planning is seen as being too narrow in its focus, its tools, and its prioritization of the spatial, material and technical facets, and is thus unable to fully and usefully address the city in all of its many dimensions. The Urban Design Ecologies approach exemplifies a perspective that acknowledges the necessity of simultaneously regarding the actually existing city on diverse registers and engaging it with multivalent tools and measures.

Hou Hanru (2003) coined the term “post-planning” to describe the dynamics of contemporary Chinese urbanism, in which the speed of

## Culture visitor



### TODAY

Reason to come here: Work for URBH, for culture research it's a place full of culture, especially the Kanton museum and other heritage building

#### Main activities:

- Take photo
- Make note at scenic spot
- Eat at restaurant
- Have a drink
- Chat with local people

### 5+

He finds there are increasing number of visitors finds different place, not only for the historic building and museum, but also for the new program and event. He can find more place to have a rest, and have fun.

#### Now activities:

- Stay for a night at hostel
- Watch dragon and lion dance
- Attend sharing session

### Daily routine



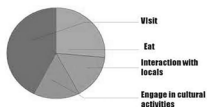
5+



### Daily routine



5+







View of plaza from cafe

-  Plaza
-  Designer shops
-  Resting area
-  Stall
-  Cafe



THE CHANGING OF NANTOU EVENTS

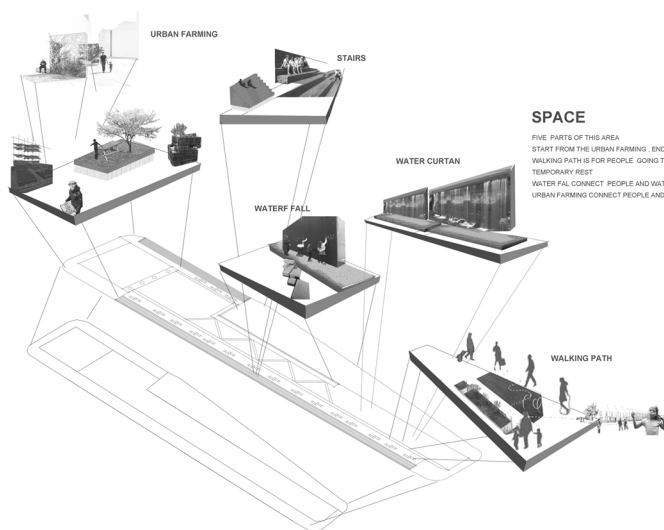
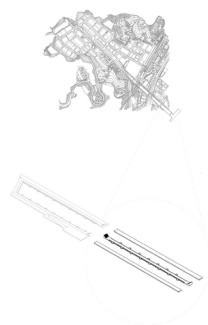
1	Government 1950	Official business	Museum Now	Exhibition
2	Guandi Intense 1980	Visiting	Guandi Temple Now	Ancestor worship
3	Government 1950	Administration building	Park 2000	Leisure activities
4	Hall 1980	Exhibition hall	Now	Exhibition
5	County government 1994	Official business	Now	Exhibition
6	Baode Temple 1394	Ancestor worship	Administration office Now	Official business
7	Baode Square 1990	Leisure activities	Now	Market
8	Industry Zone 1978	Working	Industry Zone Now	Working
9	Wen's Temple 1394	Ancestor worship	Now	Exhibition





Fig\_LAB Music Festival 2016 - Fo Tan, Nov 2015

## SPINE



## SPACE

FIVE PARTS OF THIS AREA  
 START FROM THE URBAN FARMING, ENDED UP WITH WATER CURTAIN  
 WALKING PATH IS FOR PEOPLE GOING THROUGH AND STAIRS FOR  
 TEMPORARY REST  
 WATER FALL CONNECT PEOPLE AND WATER  
 URBAN FARMING CONNECT PEOPLE AND GREEN



development and growth outstrip the ability of municipalities to anticipate and plan, such that planning becomes an exercise in post hoc intervention into urban environments after they are built and while they are inhabited. It could be debated whether this is indicative of a damning fault in the planning culture or an apt adaptation in the context of a spate of urban development unparalleled in its scale and rapidity in which, in the absence of direct precedents or tested principles, the role of planning is to put in place a rough scaffolding of urbanity that serves as a platform that gains resolution not all at once, but incrementally as urban life begins to take root and articulate its own spatial and cultural details. The city becomes its own living case study experiment.

So perhaps in the post-planning ethos lies not the anathema of planning but rather the seeds of a mode of development that is native and appropriate to the here-and-now of 21st century China, that could be seen as providing fertile ground within which the Urban Design Ecologies approach can take root as a logical extension of post-planning. The Urban Design Ecologies approach can help in taking post-planning beyond simply fixing the shortcomings of planning to engender a state of constant interrogation and intervention into existing urban environments, inventorying and mapping the existing dynamics, assets and values and discerning potential “next futures” within these existing dimensions.

In the absence of a credible and comprehensive methodology of predictive foresight or prescriptive planning, the actually-existing city takes on the role of an ongoing experiment seeking to define its own parameters, and the requisite skills and practices of those who would steer the development shift of the city all the more from those of the planner to those of the field researcher, detective, storyteller and tactician, with a recognition that any future can only be constructed with what is already on hand, not just in terms of space and material, but in terms of social capital, knowledge and relationships. This resonates strongly with Tony Fry’s (2017) “metrofitting” approach, which is based on the conviction that sustainable urban development must be driven by a keen awareness of the values, assets, risks and opportunities inherent in an existing situation and conscious interventions into this situation, mobilizing the resources, networks and knowledge already present, to steer it towards a desirable future.

In this context, the Urban Design Ecologies approach can also be seen not just as a search for visions but also as a search for allies in forming and pursuing these future visions and a quest to identify the seeds of ideas, communities, ownership and tenure structures and spatial strategies in the existing context that could provide “footholds” from which transformational strategies could begin.



## Architectural Strategies in Words A Background Scenario

Nicolò Ornaghi

The following text wants to offer a set of precedents for the *Urban Design Ecologies* approach is proposing. The precedents do not refer specifically to the clustering presented in the book yet they are meant to be a background scenario to understand the theoretical and historical foundations of the book. The methodological take of the Urban Design Ecologies research is rooted in the architectural design theory and follows the parabola of the CIAM that lead from the great phase of modern urbanism by masters as Le Corbusier (1923) or Walter Gropius (1925) to the dismantling of the congress in 1959, in Otterlo. The increasing divergencies between the old masters and the new generation stand out from the mid fifties as a diffuse necessity of swerving from the universal attitude through which modern urbanism tried – and failed – to define the modern city.

The triumph of Team 10 (the “young turks” of Otterlo congress, including Alison and Peter Smithson, Jaap Bakema, Aldo van Eyck, Georges Candilis, Shadrach Woods and Giancarlo De Carlo) was rooted on the critique of the conception of urban environments as a general standard, something that could be read through universal canons applicable anywhere. Many approaches emerged from that diaspora and many are still relevant for nowadays architecture and urban studies. They are all different and at the same time very similar. First of all they all share a switch in the perception of the field study. Urbanism is not conceived as a universal canon that allows the authors to grasp the image of the city (Lynch 1960), but it is the city itself that provides its inner evidences. If modern urbanism was assertive, these trends are halting and they root the urban analysis on the observation on the city as a specific artifact. They also share a common set of intentions tightened around a diffuse criticism towards modernism

but also around a growing attention for field research, for the emerging possibilities given by new and unexplored ways of city-telling. They are provided by architecture itself but also by unseen hybridizations of the architectural practice with other fields of knowledge such as art, sociology or literature. The precedents I will go through are gathered around three standpoints, that are anyway fluid and interconnected.

The *As Found*, as in the view of Smithson, is the focal point, following a trend initiated by the Independent Group<sup>1</sup> in London in the fifties. The researches are based on a self imposed field (often a single city, but also many cities at the same time) that becomes obsessively the only subject of attention. The books primal means is not just the analytical precision of the reading, as to produce a textbook on the city. Instead of producing a scientific manual universally applicable, they work with what it is there, by narrating it from the very personal and speculative take of the beholder. Here the main reference I will analyze is the text by Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, published in 1971.

*Architecture as a narrative practice* is the second leverage I will go through. The texts I will present are not focused on scientific correctness, yet they rely on explicitly narrative, speculative and self-oriented traits. As the scope of the publications shifted from the universal to the specific also the formats became looser and fluid. Many different outputs are proposed, as well as many different formats, often borrowed from other disciplines. They all share a common element, that is the importance of the *medium* as well as the *content*. Here the fundamental precedent is *Delirious New York* by Rem Koolhaas, where the gifted storytelling opens up the narrative potential of the harsh pragmatism of the city of New York.

In the end, as I have already mentioned, the *question of modernity* is the ultimate common ground of all the selected case studies. The shared battlefield is the diffused skepticism towards modern urban planning. Since modernism exhausted its city making potential every author engaged in a theoretical exploration and everyone had to find his own way to make space for other opportunities to be explored. My interest is mainly focused on *Architecture of the City* (1966) by Aldo Rossi specifically for its capacity to put modernism into question by proposing a theory of the city and architecture developed from an anthropological point of view.

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1 – The Independent Group (IG) were a group of artists, writers and critics who met at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London in the 1950s, and challenged the dominant modernist culture at that time, in order to make it more inclusive of popular culture.

## The As Found

As Found is a concern with the here and now, with the real and the ordinary, with the tangible and the real. (Lichtenstein and Schregenberger 2001, 9)

An ecology is an ensemble of things that is usually *in equilibrium*, complementary elements that could relate one to the other and that could be recognize as a whole, even though – of course – a difficult whole. Ecologies are supposed to be precise, ordered, self-referential and organized but at the very same they bind together entities that could also diverge, that are autonomous if not independent. Ecology is thus an ambiguous term and this ambiguity is exploited by the renown British architectural historian and critic Reyner Banham, who introduced the term into architectural debate, way before the completely different ecological trends we are witnessing nowadays. *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* was published in 1971. The book grasps the city in all its urban and architectural complexity and it is an attempt in using the term Ecology for describing the urban fabric of Los Angeles and, at the same time, to produce a taxonomic understanding of the elements of the city. The book collects the elements of Los Angeles in the famous Four Ecologies (the flatlands, which Banham named the “Plains of Id”, the beach cities “Surfurbia”, the freeways “Autopia” and the foothills).

I arrived in Los Angeles at the age of four in 1971, the year *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* was published. Mine is a generation that read Banham’s Los Angeles less as a primer on Los Angeles than as a companion to Joan Didion’s *Play It as It Lays* (1970) and Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965). Together, these authors describe the Los Angeles that shaped my childhood, a city that my mother, a displaced New Yorker, navigated ‘by feel’ and that my new father, a third-generation scion of Bunker Hill, presumed would soon eclipse New York. (Day 2009, XVI)

The description by architect and scholar Joe Day, in the foreword of a recent re-edition of the book by Banham explores how the relevance of Banham’s ideas have changed over the past forty years. The book is linked to other books whose focus is Los Angeles as the novels by the American writers Joan Didion or Thomas Pynchon. The experience of Day of the book is neither architectural nor historical, yet it is strongly emotional as if the foremost relevant role of Banham is picturing Los Angeles in a specific time and in a specific condition. The description of Banham is vast and full of intuition, yet it is also layered and blended. It brings together a fascination for the engineering masterpieces that

builds the intricate highway system as well as a personal take on Los Angeles culture and architecture. Banham understood the potential of Frank Gehry even though just the Danziger Studio was built. But he also fundamentally contributed to the history of early modernism with his subtle differentiations between Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra.

“Banham’s ecologies are interpretative and descriptive, as concerns a historian, but potentially projective (...) – they are built at the intersection of geography and history, of space and society, of quiet and movement” (Bonfantini 2017, 88).<sup>2</sup> Banham, who learned to drive to read the city through its vastness, presents an history of the present, but also of the immediate future (Whiteley 2003) of the city of Los Angeles through the architecture of the everyday life, something now fashionable as *background architecture*. By understanding popular taste and trends, without moralism, bias or naivety, he focused on industrial masterpieces and ordinary residential and commercial architecture. Then summarized in the “four ecologies” – beach, flatlands, foothills and freeways – the radical take Banham proposes is easily overwhelmed in the the everyday life of many contemporary metropolis where architecture and urban planning are smashed by the powerful engines of capital economy, technological exaptation and violent infrastructural development, “our freeway infrastructure now reflects the reduced sense in which Los Angeles remains prototypical. Globalization has built these and many other Big Ideas at full scale, with little hesitation” (Day 2009, XIX).

The attention for the “As Found” (Lichtenstein and Schregenberger 2001), for an understanding of the given conditions of a self imposed subject of study as the only way to understand the built environment, is linked to a specific tendency emerged in British Architecture and art in the fifties within a group of people known as Independent Group.

The designation As Found probably originated with the architects Alison and Peter Smithson. (...) It played a big role in a group of young and close-knit artists and architects, a system of axes in which all of the members were equal: the Smithsons, the artist Eduardo Paolozzi, the photographer Nigel Henderson and, cheeky outsider (and presumably at times instigator), the journalist Reyner Banham. (Lichtenstein and Schregenberger 2001, 8)

By engaging constraints through realism and close attention the elements of the everyday starts to acquire a refined quality. And preexistence – something usually understood as boring, or at least already seen or just *old* start to be the essential thing to look at. No novelty, no invention, no

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2 – Translation of the author.

utopian speculation. Just meaningful elements to be discovered within a territory that is given, that is real and tangible. The *As Found* is strongly anti utopian, it strongly engages reality, it relates with what it is already there, with the present, the ordinary and the apparently obvious. As such it opens a wide spectrum of possibilities for an understanding of our environment from the very specific to the very general, it teaches how to understand the quality of the normal and to avoid the unnecessary, often coinciding with the extraordinary.

### **Narrative Architecture**

I wanted to build – as a writer – a territory where I could possibly work as an architect. (Koolhaas 1993, 42-43)

Rem always wants to be a movie director. (Koolhoff 2013, 154)

If *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* is a powerful lesson on realism, *Delirious New York* is a refined course on storytelling, a proof of something that will characterize contemporary architecture since then on, clearly registered by Rem Koolhaas in his powerful book. Koolhaas disbelief in architecture as a discipline is mostly linked to its background as a journalist. So it is no surprise that he relied on the strategic potential of writing to produce architecture and above all to make it through a proper story. *Delirious New York* proposes a comprehensive history of the construction of arguably the most interesting built environment in the world and by doing so – but, more importantly, at the same time – it legitimates, through a convincing manifesto, a theory of urban congestion that will be the base for the first phase of the production of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, also known as OMA. *Delirious New York* makes space for the building production of OMA. Literature fuels architecture.

The crisis of the Modern and the Post-Modern pervasiveness allow Koolhaas to build a space of theoretical autonomy in which he could give sense to its architectural intuitions through which he constructs a mythology for Manhattan, made up of objects and characters acquiring heroic and symbolic meaning. From the anonymous but pervasive reality of Manhattan, Rem Koolhaas creates the conceptual space of the Manhattanism (with its corollaries related to the “culture of congestion”, etc). The conceptual space originates and guides the project just as the outcome of the project is responsible for new future conceptual spaces, which might be radically different from the original one.

The speculative narration dates back to a whole set of references linked to the education and the people Koolhaas had the chance to meet while studying, and then teaching, at the Architectural Association in London. For example, the renowned postcard collection on New York, which worked as a graphic double of the narration, is closely linked to a famous article written by Alvin Boyarsky, former dean of the AA, in *Architectural Design* in 1970, with the title *Chicago à la carte, The City as an Energy System* (Boyarsky 1970). Boyarsky founded his take on the city of Chicago through the constructing of a visual history based on his postcard collection largely related to the heroic phase of American History. Postcards are here a narrative pretest to bind together architectural means but also politics and media culture into a whole that is solved through a visual commentary that helps unfolding the narration. Koolhaas, that was closely linked to Boyarsky in his AA period,<sup>3</sup> borrowed the postcard trick from him and merged it with the powerful imaginary pursued by Madelon Vriesendorp (2011) to create the visual commentoire of his own New York City narration. Koolhaas rendered explicit how narrative architecture requires hybrid formats that combine visual identities, literature and architecture in a convincing narration able to speak to a broader public and to inject architecture with capacities that are not internal to the discipline.

*Delirious New York* was published in 1978, one year after a fundamental research (and the relative publication) by Rem Koolhaas and Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Berlin, A Green Archipelago*. The work is another fundamental example of a highly speculative research that goes beyond architecture and that informs it in its being, by giving it authority and strength. As a textbook on the destroyed city of Berlin in the post war/ cold war impasse the publication takes a specificity of the city – being enclosed by voids – and build a script for its possible deurbanization. The fictional project imagined a progressive shrinking of the city around fixed elements arranged into islands, and therefore *the city as an archipelago*. The experience is fundamental for Koolhaas for his own masterpiece, *Delirious New York*. It allowed him to test the narrative potential of the novel to pursue a goal that he will then fulfill through architecture: the capacity to produce a script that could reveal complexity and govern a difficult programmatic and architectural palimpsest.

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3 – The tribute paid by Rem Koolhaas to Alvin Boyarsky, even though largely explicit in many public occasions, is formalized in a publication edited by Robin Middleton, with the contributions of Rem Koolhaas, John Hejduk, Zaha Hadid and Peter Eisenman, among others (Middleton 1996).



In his teaching activities Koolhaas pushed his own concept of Manhattanism and his culture of congestion towards a dramatic breaking point. The title of the second book by the Harvard Project on the City (the research unit he leads and Harvard GSD), *Great Leap Forward* (Koolhaas 2001), is a play on Mao economic plan. But the revolution Koolhaas is referring to is an opposite one. Fueled by a relentless process of building the Pearl River Delta development questions the notion of scale itself, putting in crisis the idea of urban development. Designed to reach a population of 34 million by 2020 almost from scratch, the urbanization of the Pearl River Delta does not require any other narrative boost. Here registering the reality of things is the most efficient narrative. The Pearl River Delta case is interesting for a specificity that is extremely peculiar, “the absence, on one hand, of plausible universal doctrines and the presence, on the other, of an unprecedented intensity of production have created a unique, wrenching condition: the urban seems to be least understood at the very moment of its apotheosis.” (Koolhaas 2001, 27). The theoretical, critical and operational impasse is presented by Koolhaas as an opportunity, it creates space for a field study that does not operate retroactively (as the manifesto Koolhaas himself produced for Manhattan), but proactively, meaning a real time description of something that is already there and that was, at the time, happening in its seminal phase. Koolhaas brought together Harvard students from the fields of architecture, landscape architecture and urban design to produce interrelated studies on the Pearl River Delta. The field interests are Infrastructure, Ideology, Architecture, Politics, Landscape, Money, and they all together form the copyrighted term “City of Exacerbated Difference” (COED). Here Koolhaas pushed forward the narrative attitude and starts to merge the storyteller with the copywriter, branding contents yet to exist. The retroactive agenda of *Delirious New York* becomes proactive and starts defining a condition that was just outlined.

“*Great Leap Forward* allows Koolhaas to prove the possibility of new form of urbanism, or better said, new forms of discovery, for example, and again retroactively, in *Project Japan*” (Koolhaas and Obrist, 2011). “The emergence of the PRD with the suddenness of a comet, and the present *cloud of unknowing* that creates a kind of stealth envelope around the PRD’s existence of parallel universes that utterly contradict the assumption that globalization equals global knowledge” (Koolhaas 2001, 28).

The intellectual grandeur Koolhaas imposes himself requires a narrative envelope that could sustain and inform the story itself. In the case of *Great Leap Forward* he followed the established formula he developed

together with Bruce Mau for *SMLXL* (Koolhaas and Mau 1996). At first stance the big spine is the only similarity, but at a closer look the two heavy books are linked by the very same necessity: blurring the border between a strict architectural publication and a cultural product in a broader sense, something that could help resonate on the inner changes of society. Both books fostered collaboration. In the former between the architect and the graphic designer (but also with the editor, Jennifer Sigler). In the second Koolhaas provided the intuition and the scope of the research that was then brought forward by the people in charge of the clusters.<sup>4</sup> The result is then put together in a clear taxonomy comprising different media (diagrams, full-color pictures but also news treads) with the clear scope to produce a publication that is perceived as an *object* that produces a narrative not only through its content but also for its specific format and symbolic qualities. The coffee table format was introduced in the architectural literature by *SMLXL* and then progressively adopted by contemporaries:

The extra-heavy text five inches thick and weighing over five pounds replaced the coffee table book in the 1990s. Foster, Tschumi, Holl, MVRDV et al. followed Rem Koolhaas' S, M, L, XL. The figure of the old testament prophet reading the truth is Madelon Vriesendorp's Christmas card to her husband in 1995. (Jencks 2002, 3)

Jencks refers to many publications that followed shortly after *SMLXL*, for examples *MOVE* (UNStudio 1999) or *KM3* (MVRDV 2005), *FARMAX* (MVRDV 1998), *The Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture* (Muller 2001), *Migropolis* (Scheppe 2009), *Mutations* (Boeri, Koolhaas, Kwinter, Fabricius, Obrist, Tazi 2001), and others.

OMA and Koolhaas publications, always produced by more than one author, are often user-hostile and intricate, yet they completely revolutionized the architectural narrative with “an uncanny knack for manipulating images and texts that, though based in fact, read like the most feverish fiction” (Filler 1996, 62-63).

## Questioning Modernity

Rossi observes modern architecture and, like Adolf Loos, seems not to be convinced by what he sees as its scant modernity, by its too limited aspirations. For Rossi, as for Valéry, the modern is content with little. (Baukuh 2012, 66)

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4 – Bernard Chang for Infrastructure, Mihai Craciun for Ideology, Nancy Lin for Architecture, Yuyang Liu for Politics, Kate Orff for Landscape and Stephanie Smith for Money.

*Delirious New York* was published in 1978, a period in which postmodern architecture was at its early beginning, arising from a diffuse skepticism towards modern planning and dogmas. In addition, a huge economic crisis started to question market economy and its backside, especially in the United States. The theoretical take proposed by Koolhaas traces an original research path in a context roughly scattered between many positions, each of them constituting a particular take on the discipline through many specific and autonomous ideological and narrative apparatuses. From Aldo Rossi (1966) to Robert Venturi (1966), from Paolo Portoghesi (1982) to Leon Krier (1985).

Each author proposes a peculiar vision on the city and on architecture itself, and to do so, every architect expresses it through the written word. Many books are published in the two decades spanning from 1966 to 1986. They all question the notion of modernity with very different tools and strategies, but their unifying trait is their experimental character, meaning the necessity to propose a completely new approach, defining a breaking point with the consolidated architectural theory and practice of the immediate past. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour (1972) put the attention on Las Vegas with its billboards, the commercial strip, the famous double (decorated shed *vs* duck). The commercial became the main subject of the course Venturi held at Yale in the fall of 1968, where, together with Scott Brown and Izenour, they started to analyze Las Vegas as self-proclaimed battlefield. The book was published in 1972 and immediately became a benchmark for the possibility of a new urban analysis which resonates on the existence without preconceptions or bias. In addition, the didactic structure of the design studio, organized in a short field trip (meant to grasp a first hand opinion on the subject) and a longer analytical phase on the collected materials became a standard.

*Learning from Las Vegas*, in the work of Venturi, represents a second phase after his delicate architectures of the fifties and the sixties.

It's in 1966, with the publication of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, that Venturi started 'prompting' his architectural production coupling it with his theoretical discourse based on concepts as, "ambiguity", "contradictory levels", "double function element", "adaptability", "difficult whole". Venturi's production of those years, relying on an "historicized" use of signs and symbols, comprehends remarkable building as the Guild house (1960-1963) in Philadelphia, of Vanna Venturi House at Chestnut Hill, again in Philadelphia (1959-1964). (Biraghi, Lo Ricco, Micheli and Viganò 2010, 37)<sup>5</sup>

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5 – Translation of the author.

The complexity of those seminal works will be more and more affected by the discovery of the outspoken and irreverent architecture of Las Vegas, that will turn, in the late Venturi and Scott Brown production, into an ambiguous trend of strong Post Modern architectures the couple produced just after the release of the book.<sup>6</sup> By collecting desires and grasping the zeitgeist of early Post-Modern period Venturi and Scott Brown used architecture to extend their comment to an overall spectrum of social and economic issues and many of them still unfold in our daily life. To do so Venturi and Scott Brown accepted to “move architecture in contemporary fields – that are superficial by definition – of mass-mediated expressions: television, advertising, fashion” (Biraghi 2008, 35).<sup>7</sup>

On the other side Leon Krier tried to resist to the overall Post-Modern tendency through proposing master planning – in a period in which the overall idea of planning things was not fortunate – as a way to return to the historic quartier in order to preserve and endure urban planning in Europe. The reactionary take on urban order saw its peak with a book that was instrumental from the very issue it covered: the architecture of Albert Speer. *Albert Speer: Architecture 1932–1942* (Krier 1985), is as much a book on the minister of armaments of the Third Reich as a book on the most ambitious masterplanning of modern architecture, that is the 1937 plan for Berlin.

A radically different opinion on the redemption of the historical past is the one proposed by Aldo Rossi in the *Architecture of the City* (1966), where the advocacy for the autonomy of the discipline is built through a massive use of extra disciplinary references, from geography to anthropology. Rossi built his critique on functionalism through modern references as they were part of the education he received as a man born in Milan in 1931.

Rossi criticized the Movement Modern in architecture on the basis of a thorough, and to some extent evident, experience of modernity. Rossi had no doubt about his condition, which was more over confirmed every day by the city that surrounded him. This modernity of Rossi's, coming out of experience rather than theory, derived from his profound relationship with the innovative and cosmopolitan Milan of the sixties. (Baukuh 2012, 65)

Rossi grew up in the golden age of Milanese modernity and his intellectual agenda is tight to many architects of his generation, all questioning modernity in different ways, and gathering around the leading

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6 – Just see as a reference, among many others, the Allen Memorial Art Museum addition built in Oberlin in 1973-1976.

7 – Translation of the author.

figure of Ernesto Nathan Rogers. Rogers directed *Casabella* from 1953 to 1965 and Gae Aulenti, Aldo Rossi, Vittorio Gregotti, Giorgio Grassi, Guido Canella and Giancarlo De Carlo were all in the editorial board. In 1955, Rogers wrote the famous editorial “Le preesistenze ambientali” (Rogers 1955, 2-4), one of the “first serious critique of the work of the generation of modernist architects” (Forty 2000, 132). He opposed the modernist tendency in dealing with every urban (or architectural) project as a single abstract problem, totally untied from the site it fits in and introduced the context as a core part of his theory.

It is worth investigating what Rogers meant by “preesistenze ambientali”, for him different in several respects from the Anglo-Saxon “context” with which it has subsequently become confused. (...) what distinguished Rogers’s concept was the absolute importance of the historical continuity manifested by the city and existing in the minds of its occupants. (Forty 2000, 132)

The interest for the work of Rossi lies, for the means of this text, in the aspects Rossi traced as fundamental for an understanding of the city. The city is complex and ambiguous and consequently urban analysis is complex and stratified. As with Adolf Loos, the complexity of the city is complemented through the (exterior) austerity of architecture. “The level of profundity that Loos attributed to his own work from the start meant that any addition was immediately pointless. For Loos, everything was already present in the city; it was just a matter of paying attention, not adding” (Baukuh 2012, 83). Rossi follows Loos agenda. At the same time questioning abstraction, on the level of the city, because the city must be recognized as a single ensemble of diversities and embracing it on the scale of architecture because the city is complex by itself and there is no need to add complexity. The relationship is between the physical environment and the form of architecture and it outlines its perception through the attention required by the city to be understood. In the chapter entitled “Locus” Rossi defines the complexity of places in relation to architecture. He writes, referring to French geographers:

They trace the relation of architecture to its location – the place of art – and thereby its connection to, and the precise articulation of, the locus itself as a singular artifact determined by its space and time, by its topographical dimensions and its form, by its being the seat of a succession of ancient and recent events, by its memory. All these problems are in large measure of a collective nature; they force us to pause for a moment on the relationship between place and man, and hence to look at the relationship between ecology and psychology. (Rossi 1982, 107)

## Conclusion

The three connected clusters here presented (As-Found, Narrative Architecture, Questioning Modernity) are rooted in the recent history of architectural theory and practice, but they are far from being outdated for the here and now. The emerging narrative approaches were – and still are – meant to add layers to the comprehension of the city by building a richer and more complex urban history, by proposing a strategy that goes beyond the analysis of the city in its shape and forms. They relate on architecture and at the same time they shift it from the main focus. And they do so for the conviction that, for an understanding of the city as a complex entity, the disciplinary knowledge is not enough. By expanding their field of action through a multidisciplinary approach, those tendencies define a richer and more defined image of the city. They are still relevant for the reading of nowadays cityscape because they embrace the urban fabric as a whole by understanding differences and complexity.

For example, many present practices conduct urban research following the *As Found* as a method, even though “The idea of an *As Found* method is, admittedly, tricky, because the term method is too closely related to will. *As found* is not an approach that lends itself easily to being guided by an assertive will; it calls for the will to question” (Lichtenstein and Schregenberger 2001, 9). For example, the will to question is openly guiding the didactic of Tom Emerson at ETH Zürich. The British architect is leading a series of courses, named *Atlases*, where he “started looking at declining or shrinking industrial cities not from the perspective of the masterplan but from the prospective of the survey, so taking the idea that the first act of design is in the observation (...) so we started a kind of method by which our students would go to these places (...) and try to find almost the instructions for their own renaissance within what we find on site”.<sup>8</sup> By opposing to a fictitious narrative the pragmatism of the field Emerson rejects the conceptual thinking that pervades contemporary architecture. Narrative architecture “combines novelist’s ear with the architect’s eye into such a seamless instance of fact and fiction, theory and application” (Caruso 2009, 74) so it is efficient but also hardly risky. Both Tom Emerson (Scalbert and 6A architects 2009) and Adam Caruso (2009) belong to a British generation that follow the one of the Smithson and even though they strongly diverge one from the other they share a deep skepticism towards a side effect of the current use of narration into highly speculative architectural storytelling. If on one side narrative

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8 – <https://vimeo.com/219929510>. See also, as a documentation of the projects, the final pamphlets published by Studio Tom Emerson on the cities of Forst, Glasgow and Galway between 2012 and 2016.

architecture allowed gifted authors and architects (as Koolhaas, Venturi or Rossi) to expand the disciplinary field of knowledge, on the other it allowed marketing and mass-media tools (as advertising) to infiltrate into the discipline so that, nowadays, it seems almost impossible to sell a project without a proper concept (i.e. a narrative). Often the concept is completely independent from the design of the building and sometimes it becomes the building itself turning banality into spectacle.

In industrial and post-industrial capitalist society, “the concept” (or, better, conceptualism) has become an essential means by which the architect can communicate with potential clients. In developed democratic societies, the concept seems to be an unavoidable communication tool, and it has become the basis of the architectural profession: the architect is now perceived as the great inventor or engineer of idols (or chimeras). (Thill 2012, 159-160)

That is why the effort of Rossi is fundamental, because Rossi recognizes that the complex and multifaceted nature of the urban facts requires to treat architecture with the autonomy it deserves. At the same he acts within and outside the discipline by providing autonomy through heteronomy. Questioning modernity is for Rossi a necessity:

Architecture is defined with respect to its cultural context and, vice versa, architecture becomes a fundamental means of understanding the society that has produced it. This complex link between the immobility of the city and the contradictions that have generated it is recognized by Loos and Lévi-Strauss from two different but convergent points of view. (Baukuh 2012, 79)

Loos and Lévi-Strauss (the two principal references of the book) offered Rossi a model for the writing of *The Architecture of the City*. “Rossi makes the work of a contemporary French anthropologist react with that of a Viennese architect of the early 20th century, producing a brilliant interdisciplinary mix that lays the foundations for a radical criticism of the assumptions of modern architecture.” (ibid., 78) Rossi does it with a strong faith in his present time, “In Rossi’s view, contemporary society is advanced enough to evaluate urban phenomena in all their complexity, to reconsider long-term processes, to deal rationally with the unconscious deposited in the city” (ibid., 66). And that’s why *The Architecture of the City* is still a relevant reading: because it provides a hypothesis for an understanding of the role of architecture in the globalized world we witness every day that is far more complex than Italy in 1966. More than ever it reminds us that any oversimplification of architecture could lead the discipline into an awkward irrelevance.







## AgriUrbana A Project for Porta Romana

Francesca Berni, Veronica Ferrari, Madalina Ghibusi, Luyi Liu, Federica Marchetti,  
Gianfranco Orsenigo, Jing Sun

### Con(temporary) living

A paradigmatic shift is happening in the way of living in the city: open space has more and more importance, due to the modifications of human lifestyle and economic balances. The urban life is more related to the workspace, to the open-air life, it is more linked to the mobility and to the need of inhabiting the public space. Together with these changes we are discovering the open-air life linked to the experience of our landscape and natural heritage, coherently with a recent slowing down of the cities expansion and new kind of lifestyles of the inhabitants. We are understanding the importance of the nature for the Earth balance and for our daily life both in city and outside it (Mancuso 2013). Moreover, variation of economic balances changes even the life cycle of buildings and metropolitan areas: in the time of the functional variations, the object degrades to a condition of abandonment or semi-abandonment, waiting for some type of renewal. This condition can be a challenge to reflect about the contemporary condition of the city, the people and the architectural project. The expression *con(temporary) living* wants to express the necessity to think again about the practice of the architectural project starting from the actual conditions of the metropolitan space and lives, interpreting the present forms of sharing economies and space in order to set up, with the project, ways and tools to inhabit the urban places.

The question of the public space is inevitably tied to the infrastructural system and in Milan the topic became strategic because of the progressive abandonment of entire complexes of railway yards. A condition of obsolescence proves the temporal detachment that exists between the contemporary metropolitan needs and their current space arrangement. In this sense, it is important to re-think about them and their role inside the metropolitan landscape mainly looking to sustainable solutions that firstly engage the nature as the main tool of building the cityscape and give an updated sense to the relationship between people and metropolitan contexts. What we call *con(temporary) living* concerns the challenge to think again the role of the project in relation with the present changes of lifestyles and needs. At the same time (con)temporary living is a terminology that underlines the concept of simultaneity inside the *AgriUrbana* process, that consists in taking care of the entire environment, a hybrid ecosystem that continuously mixes nature and artificial.

*AgriUrbana* is the proposal which interprets the condition of dismantlement as the possibility to create a new paradigm of public space, to link the agricultural landscape with the metropolitan ones, to merge the intelligence of plants (Mancuso 2013) with advanced technologies, to apply sharing economies on sharing activities and vice versa, to reconcile the people with the dimension of public space through the experience of the nature. This is why the name brings in itself the term *agricultural* with the abbreviation *agri*: it consists in the practice of the nature by the people, linked to the cultivation of plants and even vegetables but above all to the sense of community that can spring by sharing activities about plants and all the aspects related to gardens and parks in metropolitan contexts. The word *urbana* expresses the dimension of the city, where the city is that condition of meetings, exchanges, relations, sharing of economies, experiences, ideas and projects: one of the first goal of *AgriUrbana* is exactly the beginning of every project, that is to let the space growing up with the people who inhabit it, with two main instruments, the nature and the city.

Indeed, there are two kinds of emergencies: the environmental one and the living one. Milan is a city that is already dealing with them starting from the EXPO 2015, not reflecting about the food as object of consumption but as a tool for re-thinking the Earth, the human being and possible urban regenerations that could spring. Similar to the plants, the city is something that never stops to transform and the proposal of *AgriUrbana*

aims to listen more to the lessons that the nature could give us: in these terms, the idea could involve not only the area of the AgriUrbana project but also all the other abandoned rail yards becoming in this way a metropolitan system of transportation and parks. A kind of green ring which runs outside and across the city, articulating linear systems (mobility) and parks (abandoned rail yards), trying to read every time the contextual vocations for the design of the green system, in each site and in each particular area. Then it is of paramount importance to work moving our homocentric point of view, combining different disciplines to understand how to articulate the process to the contemporary condition of the world. A holistic approach that looks at the project as something that could be drawn and transform by the entire city, in a kind of a permanent work in progress project for a sustainable living where the architects are in the midpoint of the space realization.

## Opportunities

Comparing with the other world cities, the unique condition of Milan can be found in that person standing in the urban core of the city, that can catch the sight combining the urban landscape and the great nature scenery. This is one of the existing and enlightening gifts of Milan. Before the well-known worldwide declaration in EXPO 2015, Milan, which was asked to re-think the relationship between human being and nature, promoted the project Raggi Verdi.<sup>1</sup> This project aimed to improve the public space in the city and the city everyday life of all citizens. Moreover, it tried to become fundamental to building a new image of Milan, an occasion to rethink the contemporary city in the physical dimension of public space. In other words, Milan was expected a new image, *Green*. Further, and in 2015, at the Milan EXPO, this green image was somehow delimited to agriculture. More precisely, it made food, the way of cooking and eating, agriculture, and the full circular process of producing in farms, to be seen as a bridge to discuss the innovative way of how human beings sojourn in our lonely planet. This idea can be developed further to face the sustainable development problem of the contemporary city from an essentially living point of view.

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1 – See more information about the project on: [www.aim.milano.it/it/progetti/archivio-progetti/raggi-verdi](http://www.aim.milano.it/it/progetti/archivio-progetti/raggi-verdi); Milano City, Association for Metropolitan Interests, 2015, RaggiVerdi, Milano.

So, AgriUrbana is a project proposal that continues the discovery of how to use urban agriculture as a tool to comprehensively deal with the contemporary city development complex questions. It should be noted that, the area of Porta Romana which is the AgriUrbana location, is also supporting this tool because it is located in the southern part of Milan, that is exactly the link area between urban and rural conditions.

### **The Multi-Ecology Approach**

The concept of AgriUrbana mixes in a cross-disciplinary way the open results of an urban ecology research (Gandy 2014) applied in the specific case and social economical context of a Milanese area. One main challenge of this project was to simultaneously activate and re-qualify an abandoned space on both temporary and contemporary dimensions using as a trigger the unique opportunities of Milan. An answer to this challenge was searched throughout a “multi-ecology” approach. In this specific case, the research method is structured on four main ecologies: *Space, Identity, Policy and Program*, as these were found to be the most suitable and relevant ones in the context of the project. Secondly, the choice of only these four ecologies was also based on the cross-disciplinary support offered by specialists in psychosociology, city-government, service designers and urban planners. Following this approach, in the abandoned Milanese area of Porta Romana the objective was to address different points of view on multiple scales to arrive to a sustainable proposal, as the area is characterized by a load of layers that show the transition of the space physically and socially with local and global impact.

In the case study of AgriUrbana, Policy was “built” engaging stakeholders into policies that have the potential to re-activate the area focusing on its specificity. Program promotes the quality of flexibility on both short and long term, that is capable to balance together the different rhythms of the agriculture, the city and the needs of the society. The Space ecology was developed starting from the existing layers that have the ability to structure the entire area and, at the same time, can support modular interventions. The social framework of the Identity ecology stated the importance of the common and specific needs, attachments, challenges and goals of the people as defining inputs of the AgriUrbana concept on human scale and condition.

## Space

The project area, the former rail yard of Porta Romana, is located in the southern-east part of the city of Milan. The area is situated on the border between the historical part of the city and a more recent expansion, in correspondence with one of the main circular roads of Milan. The topic of dismantled railway areas is of present interest. It has been studied and researched as it is considered by the municipality and by various actors involved, one of the priorities of the city. Some architects have also been involved, through an ideas competition, with the aim of proposing new urban development strategies and regeneration. The primary purpose of recovering this site is bringing the two different sides together, giving it a new continuity. For this reason, it is necessary to widen the intervention at the city scale and after that to zoom-in at the district's scale. So, the abandoned space of Porta Romana is one of the most critical areas within the city but at the same time with enormous potential for it.

The aim of AgriUrbana is also to reconnect the site and the neighborhood with the city. To reach this goal, the analysis of the residential town, existing services and streets, is searching to put them into the system by proposing a link network. In this sense, AgriUrbana worked on the design of new pedestrian and cycle paths in order to provide the city users a new way of living, discovering and enjoying the city. The cycling paths of AgriUrbana create a new strong link between existing relevant elements, such as schools and universities, local community, parks, and cultural centers, and the future park in the AgriUrbana area. The “periurban landscape” (Gregotti 2015) of South Agricultural Park (Parco Agricolo Sud) is also involved in this strategy with the aim to establish a new relationship between the city and the nearest countryside. The new pedestrian and cycle paths wind through the park area as a red string that crosses and connects the green areas and all the activities developed within it. Thanks to this path, city users can walk alongside the entire park, simply cross it or enjoy directly the nature in the middle of the green areas. These paths are part of a larger open system: three main green corridors and thematic clusters of activities that colonize the area without a fixed use thanks to an open-end approach. The pedestrian path develops in a very fluid way within the site, according to the spatial flexibility of the clusters, it reconnects the Scalo with the rest of the urban tissue and it represents the structure for pop up installations that can give to the citizens functional clues about the clusters that are inside the rail yard. Along the way that

is designed with different road dimensions, there are spaces to sit while the vegetation develops with a high stem alternating carpeting vegetation to ensure the right combination of lighting, views, colors and sensations. Ecological and natural materials, such as stone and clay, were considered as a suitable solution for paving.

## Policy

The area of Porta Romana should be seen within the broader transformation process of abandoned rail yards. Since 2005 FS Sistemi Urbani (on behalf of Ferrovie dello Stato owner of the areas), the City council of Milano and the Lombardy Region have been working together to design a strategical vision for the rail yards system and share the general goals of its transformation. This process is still on going,<sup>2</sup> with its stops and restarts, and it is a resource for the strategy of the project because it configures already a work table that over the time has drawn a referred strategy and a broader field of possibilities. 65% of the yards are consisted of green areas and public services, a circular line of public transport, a vocational destination of each area and a functional mix. Designing a proposal for the area of Porta Romana, however, needs a characterization that depends both by spatial characteristics and the local resources, economic and not only but also of knowledge, skills and involvement (Dente and Fareri 2009), that the project could engage. Looking on the area and its surroundings we can record a complex cloud of players and initiatives. Regarding players in a simplifying attitude, we can group them in clusters: public or collective institutions (Milano City council, Municipio 5, Coldiretti, schools, Parco Agricolo Sud), strong local players (Fondazione Prada, Bocconi University, Talent Garden), associations and populations (families, workers, commuters). Temporary events use, or have used, parts of the area for music festivals (Social Music City, Festa dell'Unità, Milano), international street food villages and others as such, or take place around these as in the case of the vegetable market Campagna Amica<sup>3</sup> in the courtyard of the former Consorzio Agrario.

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2 – For an overview of the process refer to website [www.scalimilano.vision](http://www.scalimilano.vision). During our workshop FS Sistemi Urbani invited five international design offices (Stefano Boeri Architetti, MAD Architects, Mecanoo, Miralles Tagliabue EMBT and Cino Zucchi Architetti) to propose a vision for the all the system and suggestions for specific areas.

3 – Fondazione Campagna Amica promoted by Coldiretti, is born in 2008 to realize initiatives to express the value and the dignity of the Italian agriculture, its key role in taking care of the environment, of the territory, of the traditions and of the culture, of the health, of the food safety, of the equity, of the access to the food to a correct price, of the social aggregation and of the job.

At the same time an articulated panel of policies, in different thematic fields, are going on in the city of Milano and its metropolitan area. In many cases the players we mentioned before are involved with different roles. Starting from this rich complexity and overlapping players, policies and the area's features, the Milano Food Policy<sup>4</sup> appears to be a fertile tool to thematise the transformation process and to facilitate the engagement of other co-designers and resources. The reasons for this choice are starting from the space as in the availability of open areas and position in the city. Then, the identity as its ideal connection with Parco Agricolo Sud, the presence of the Coldiretti and the legacy of EXPO 2015 in the city. Added to these, another reason is the program with the proximity to the innovative agricultural district and the increasing need around the area and in the city of services related to production, consumption and experience about food. Join the Food Policy is a tool to build a specific work table around which few stakeholders define the general framework in which they imagine, promote, and judge the different initiatives of development and transformation, in other words, they make things happen.<sup>5</sup> Each initiative involves different facilitators and beneficiaries, and define thematic work tables. The initiatives read the food thematic in a large spectrum imagining how it could influence the contemporary living. This process follows the transformation during the time, at the beginning to promote the area and show the opportunities, in between to facilitate the area infrastructure and support the building activities and after to create knowhow and handle what is done. Its advancement is not linear but with forward and backward pushes in an open-ended approach, learning step by step how to cooperate, by assuming mistakes and searching for new opportunities. Sometimes the proposals are confined to the area sometimes they join a city network or try to create it.

Opening the area to citizens and showing its spatial potential in the first year could be possible by hosting in the area events related to city initiatives like Milano Design Week, Piano City Milano and Fa la Cosa Giusta, while in parallel filling out the programme schedule, like in the "Reflection-in-action" method (Schön 1983).

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4 – Refer to the website [www.comune.milano.it/foodpolicy/](http://www.comune.milano.it/foodpolicy/)

5 – Refer to (Capano, Lippi, 2016) for an overview of how the decision makers (the work table) choose certain specific instruments to the two main purposes of decision-making: the search for effectiveness and the construction of a common acceptance.

## Identity

Inside the research, the Identity point of view was the one focusing its goals on the activation and support of a joint collaboration and symbiosis between the identities present on all the levels of the contemporary urban environment. The focus on people defines the character of one area because when dealing with an abandoned area what is physically empty at first sight can be rich in other hidden meanings. This determination of seeking beyond what is generally available should shape future interventions if we want to cross the boundaries of the contemporary condition of space. So, the social layer is the base of the Identity ecology. The methodology defined for this ecology was aiming towards defining the most appropriate questions that can lead to answers about the character of the area, the challenges, needs and wishes of both the inhabitants and the visitors of the same area. Using the specific terms of the sociological framework that were applied, the focus was on the optimal experiences, place attachment and participation of the random people encountered in the area, through tools like interviews, photo-video proofing, and site observations. The diversity discovered was overwhelming, but the decision was to try to use it as an inspiration, as both the commons and the specifics of a human are what we aim for when we search for synergy, interaction and growth both as individuals and as parts of a society. Shifting back to the AgriUrbana approach, in order to answer to diversity, we must also assume the dynamism of it, forcing the proposal to open even more than the multi-ecology approach suggests. In this new hypothesis, we started thinking on what is a reliable solution that is sustainable in time, that connects all the pleasures, wishes and challenges of different ages, different cultures, different conditions of being in the space, both physically and mentally. "People look to cooperate with others when they want to do more than they can do alone" (Zeisel 2006, 32) is a simple yet clear and powerful way of talking about cooperation. But how do we design an adaptive solution to this diversity and dynamic change? We need to gather information in a continuous way, from random people to specialists and back, in a "ping-pong" movement of the decision that excludes the "definitive" character in any form and has the possibility to seal the openness of the solution. It is also challenging to anticipate future behaviours in the "spongy" and absorbing present of the global mobility that makes temporary the main dimension of the time.

So, open and dynamic are the first premises of designing a social engaging solution in AgriUrbana proposal. We want people to engage because it is proofed to be one of the keys to evolution. We discovered clues about



their emotions, goals and habits. Should we take these insights further by using them both as triggers and goals, inviting the beneficiary of space in the design team? Having these in mind, we arrived to the question of how can we co-design with people that are not necessarily prepared or whiling to engage in this kind of continuous process. Co-design, in order to reach realistic and quality results should use tools that are adaptable to the participants inputs during the entire process. In this way, co-design is not only a tool “but an analytical concept that interrogates the extent to which participants in a design process (including beneficiaries) are able to influence what is being conceived, developed and delivered for their purported benefit(s)” (Britton 2016, 36). But how do we motivate them to engage and interact using all these insights? Conditioning and forcing people into doing specific actions is proofed to be leading to more isolation. Instead, mixing joy and need in a motivational package might re-qualify a solution for all the human natures.. Following these questions that arose during the research, the proposal of the Identity ecology that keeps the quality of the approach to remain open is in the form of a challenge: let us design a game to engage and motivate people to co-design the space by introducing both as premises and goals the emotions, attachments, needs and challenges of the players.

## Program

In AgriUrbana, architecture, nature and program are linked together and are based on this purpose: the idea that – in the *con(temporary)* city – all of these should be adaptable in order to satisfy the needs of a fluid society that constantly changes. We can say that the project “takes shape by creating time-based flexibility. (...) In practice, time-based flexibility means working in steps, whereby results are always open to change” (Berjevoet and van Tuijl 2016, 39). For this reason, AgriUrbana is an open-end process, not just considering the spatial aspects, but also the program of activities. All the uses are not stable and fixed, but changeable and flexible according to the occasions, the needs of the communities involved, the private stakeholders and the municipality. In this way, any cluster of the system represents – at the same time – different possibilities in terms of spatial and program requirements. In particular, the design proposal suggests various uses of the place according with three main themes: “knowing the space”, “project set out” and “enjoy the project”. In the first theme, inhabitants and different players get familiar with this area, taking up the challenge of a new lifestyle and discovering its qualities through temporary spaces. This topic fosters the connection of the area to the rest of the city, the rise of communities, new cultural activities and

sharing spaces. In the second one, people and stakeholders get involved into the definition of the program engaging institutions, associations and privates, co-designing the project and adding different contributions. In the last topic, all the actors become the real promoters/users of the park.

This kind of open program system allows the integration during the year of a multipurpose kind of activities and events according to bottom-up and top-down approaches. The overlapping of the uses allows a constant experience of the park following its main attitude: being a common urban space. The presence of temporary and permanent activities gives us the chance to propose a calendar linked to the seasonal change of the agricultural landscape, using the time of plants growth as a reference to define the use of the place during the year. We can imagine that for any topic can be developed events and activities promoted by important circuits in Milan (for instance: Fuorisalone, Milano Fashion week, Social Music City) or local communities and associations. In this way Porta Romana can be really involved into the city, being a place to engage people into the urban life. Inhabitants are not just passive users but become real protagonists in Porta Romana, participating or promoting new ways to enjoy the urban space. From this perspective, festivals and fairs for specific groups of people together with temporary and permanent uses of the spaces would be linked to the three vocations of the area: food, culture, accommodation. These aspects are involved considering the proximity of Parco Agricolo Sud, the presence of schools, universities and start up incubators (Bocconi, IED, Talent Garden) and the housing requirements for specific targets (especially students and young workers). In this way and according to specific policies, the program can represent the activator of the urban transformation process and can help to enrich the identity of the place. The project does not consider just the physical opportunities to reach the goal. AgriUrbana takes advantage of online platforms, social media profiles and digital games as instruments to support the dialogue between all the parts involved.

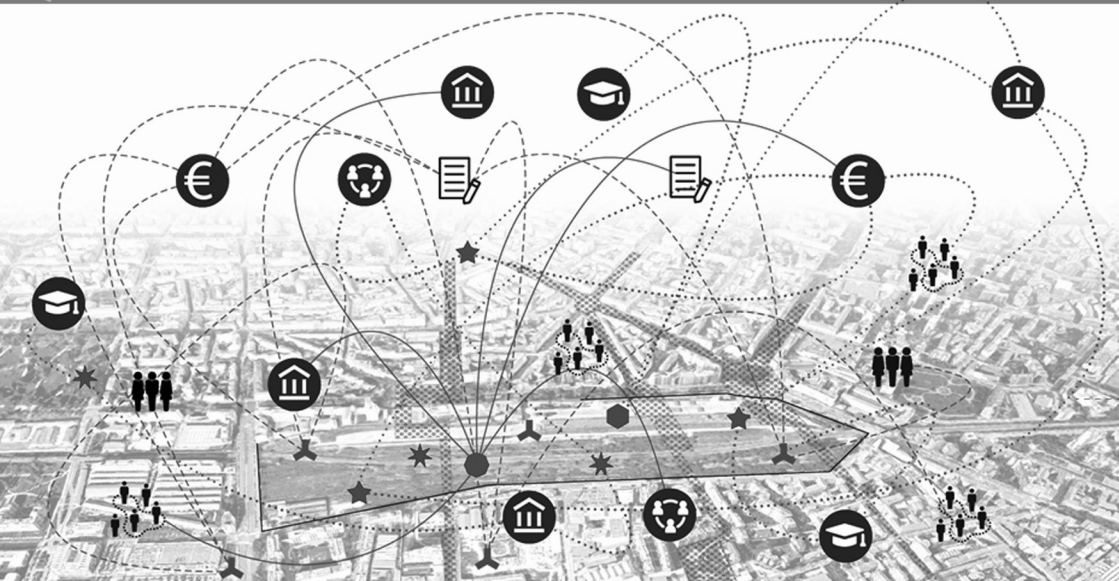
## **Conclusion**

At the end of this phase, every ecology, developed in its own way, represents a series of tools to co-design together the future of Porta Romana. Activating a project with this approach means to work in a collaborative play between all the actors involved in the urban development. For this reason, it would represent a way to enrich the design of the space and its future use by the inhabitants. In the traditional approach, many factors aren't visible at the beginning of the design process: thanks to many

contributions, the general frame is clearer, and the action of the architect becomes more focused on what really matters. These multi-disciplinary contributions can act like forces that model the construction of the design process defining the system of the urban contemporaneity:

Putting the spatial problematic into terms of forces – the relative strength of socio-political forces – effectively gets us out of a number of ludicrous dilemmas: either the city is non-existent or else it is a system; either space is an inert underlay or else it is the ‘medium’ of a fully self-contained ecological reality; and either the urban sphere occupies a niche or else it is a subject. (Lefebvre 1974, 382)

This inquiry proposed by Henry Lefebvre back in 1974, was anticipating exactly this contemporary urban space and the open-approach of it from multiple points of view that can make the process arrive into a point where the city can only be validated if it is seen as a system of all the socio-political forces. The socio-political forces that guided the design of AgriUrbana thinking development were interpreted through the four most relevant ecologies: Space, Policy, Identity and Program.





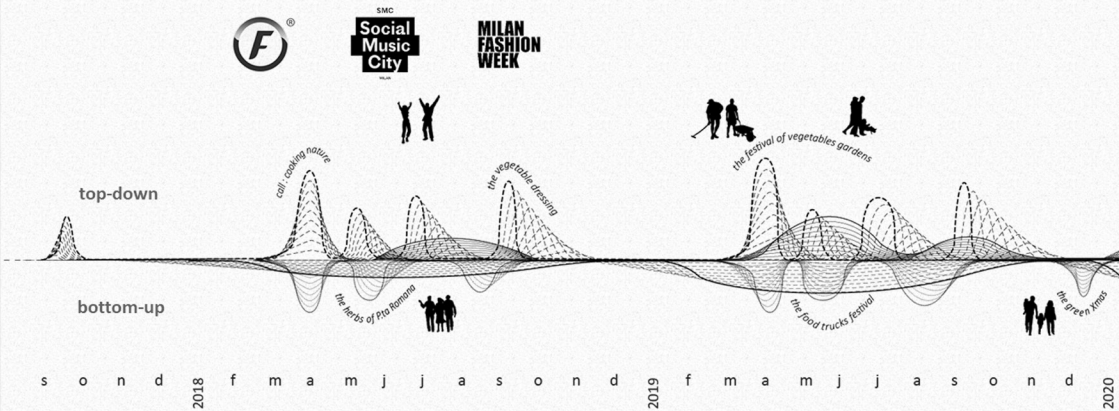
# IDENTITY PROGRAM

AGRIURBANA

DIVERSITY ENGAGE CO-DESIGN GAME CALENDAR ACTION AGENDA

The Identify Ecology proposes a game to engage the diversity of people in co-designing the area together with interdisciplinary teams of specialists. Using the play of playing, a board game starts from both the common and specific wishes and needs of the people in order to allow each player to create their own storyboard map. The "winner" is the player that arrives to the fullest storyboard throughout one day, a storyboard that he should be send to the teams of specialist responsible who testing and adding the design strategy to be becoming information from the society

The Program Ecology is an open system that allows the integration during the year of a multipurpose kind of activities and events according to bottom-up and top-down approaches. The co-design of the uses allows a constant evolution of the park following its main attitude: being a common urban space. The presence of temporary and permanent activities gives us the chance to propose a calendar related to the seasonal change of the agricultural landscape, using the time of the plants growing process as a reference to define the use of the place during the year





SPACE

IDENTITY

POLICY

PROGRAM





## Policy + Program + Identity = Space

Pierluigi Salvadeo

Nowadays we are no longer able to catalogue the spaces and things that surround us in our lives on the basis of the traditional descriptive categories, a condition to which we have grown accustomed and for which history has been preparing us for some time. As far back as the late sixties, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour were thinking about a city where symbolic value had taken the place of the material substance of architecture (Venturi et al. 1972). *Learning from Las Vegas* originated as a research exercise for the students of the Yale School of Art and Architecture and in the analysis they carried out the architectural systems of *space*, *structure* and *functional program* could literally be replaced by a comprehensive representative form that it was no longer possible to describe in terms of known categories of form and function. Jean Baudrillard, who wrote *Le système des objets* (Baudrillard 1968) just a few years prior to *Learning from Las Vegas*, came to more or less the same conclusions. For Baudrillard objects have by now undergone every possible process of cataloguing and it seems that the vocabulary is no longer adequate to name them. However hard we try to propose classifications, none of them will any longer be able to respond to the complexity of uses, history, culture and mental structures that govern the life of all things. In fact objects possess a charge that goes beyond their form or their function, and one that affects the categories of culture, experience and the mind.

*Abstraction.* It is like a sort of abstraction, which predominates and comes at this point to be considered the fundamental reality of the object, but it is precisely from this new reality that it is possible to govern the transformations of the environment. Thus, for Baudrillard, objects have lost the “substantiality which was their basis, the form which enclosed

them, whereby man made them part of his self-image: it is now space which plays freely between them, and becomes the universal function of their relationships and their ‘values’” (Baudrillard 1968, 21). Spatial values that have become independent of the things that have always characterized them, such as function, form, material and technology. In these new conditions abstraction is the most concrete reality of objects and the space generated by them.

*Concreteness.* Next it fell to Rem Koolhaas, journalist, author, scriptwriter, urbanist and architect, to present his views on the situation as an acute and inventive reporter, writing his retroactive manifesto for Manhattan toward the end of the seventies. He gave it the dazzling title of *Delirious New York*, for Manhattan, he argued, “is a mountain range of evidence without manifesto” (Koolhaas 1978, 6). It is the already constructed, and therefore real, product of an as yet unformulated theory, i.e. that of a world “totally fabricated by man” in order to allow him “to live inside fantasy.” Manhattan is an inhabited abstraction, and the irrationality of its architecture and its spaces answers to a constitutive logic that can probably not be traced back to the rational principles that usually govern the construction of the buildings and the formulation of the spaces in the city.

*Context.* Rem Koolhaas called this “Manhattanism,” and “fuck context”, the slogan he coined many years after the publication of *Delirious New York*, would for him be the obvious expression of the emergence of another kind of relationship between the “written text,” represented by the project with its constituent rules, and the context in which it is set, which before him had always been the object of reference and space of explanation for much of the reasoning behind the building. The type of project evoked by Koolhaas is one that offers an all-inclusive, or rather a synthetic response, and one that permits continual modification and updating without losing its own underlying motivations.

*Integrity.* One of the earliest projects in which the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) took this approach was the one for the competition for new City Hall of The Hague (Lucan 1990). I mention it here because it is a project that derives its deepest principles from *Delirious New York*, written a few years earlier. The idea is that above a certain scale, the building has to have an integrity and an autonomous value of its own, with specific architectural and figurative features. In addition, on the inside, the architectural program has to be developed with freedom and flexibility, even disengaging itself from the form of the space. It is in this way that the building can truly carry out its role within the city, combining, to use the words of Koolhaas, combining, to use the words of Koolhaas, “architectural specificity with programmatic indeterminacy” (Koolhaas et al. 1998, 921).

*Decontextualization.* In The Hague Koolhaas disengaged intellectual processes from emotional ones. He mixed everything up, making use of things to which traditional histories of architecture would not, up until that moment, have given either room or credit. Indulging in a general principle of decontextualization, the building evokes a culture of congestion recounted through a sequence of inhabited walls whose sum resembles an abstract metropolitan skyline. Out of this comes a broken-down volume that multiplies its visual planes and effects of depth. There is no real relationship between exterior and interior and no sense of moral duty governs the gap between container and content. The so-called context is not even represented in the drawings that illustrate the project, because it is superfluous and it could even be argued that the building is *its own context*. The form of the building is no longer a consequence of the functional program or vice versa, and it expresses an abstract figurativeness that could easily be located in a variety of geographical situations, superseding any utilitarian solution and any concern for the contextual.

*Transnational.* This was a building that seemed to anticipate by many years the transnationality that today is often expressed with a certain nonchalance in the architecture and the spaces of our cities. The figurative nature of the architecture migrates from one place to another on the planet, with the complicity of fashion, design and company branding, as well as the various types of more or less social media, the Web, the speed and ease of movement of people and things, the cultural exchanges between institutions, the general sense of hybridization of the spaces of our existence and much more.

*Landscapes.* It is a theme that Arjun Appadurai, an Indian-born anthropologist who is a naturalized US citizen and considered one of the top experts on the cultural aspects of globalization, tackles in a broad and cogent manner. For him, communication through the contemporary media combined with the circulation of people generates a “new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities (in which) we see moving images meet deterritorialized viewers” (Appadurai 1996, 4). In other words a new space of the imagination has been created that stems from the mobile relationship between a continually migrating population of viewers and the boundless images produced by all the possible mass-media events in circulation. We are speaking of imaginary landscapes which Appadurai divides into various categories—“ethnoscapes,” “mediascapes,” “technoscapes,” “financescapes” and “ideoscapes”—that are intertwined in every possible way but of which “the individual actor is

the last locus.” All these landscapes are the building blocks of “imagined worlds”, that is to say spaces of the imagination evoked by advertising and brands which intersect and are mixed up with the real spaces inhabited by people and occupied by things. Thus for Appadurai:

The lines between the realistic and the fictional landscapes (...) are blurred, so that the farther away these audiences are from the direct experiences of metropolitan life, the more likely they are to construct imagined worlds that are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects, particularly if assessed by the criteria of some other perspective, some other imagined world. (Appadurai 1996, 35)

*Places.* All too explicit from this point of view is the case of Prada, which in Los Angeles, on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, has neither sign nor brand name on the street, relying on the threshold as a space of transition between the real world on the outside and the one that is more a projection of the imagination on the inside. There is no need for the brand to be displayed in the restricted dimension of a local space. It is much more exciting and economy. If we think for example of the Abercrombie & Fitch chain<sup>1</sup> which dispenses completely with signs, entrusting the identification of its presence to the perfume that emanates from its stores or the ostentatious sensuality of the athletically built members of its staff stationed at the entrance, the subject of selfies posted continually on the social networks, or to the images of various advertising campaigns with an amiably sexy content. They are all imaginary or imagined spaces, transnational spaces, that are equally at home on the Web and in material reality, but in any case express their own idea of place.

*Regeneration.* And if it were not so we would not be able to calmly accept the building covered with gold leaf at the Fondazione Prada in Milan, which instead of trying to establish relations with the context of the former manufacturing zone that surrounds it, flaunts itself as a new context of reference.<sup>2</sup> And that is what it has actually become now, given that it is from precisely this new context that the regeneration of the entire area of the Scalo di Porta Romana draws much of its energy. Different, but equally significant, is the case of Bilbao and the Guggenheim Museum designed by Frank O. Gehry (Rocca 1995). Its location, on a former industrial site, placed it within the purview of the plan of urban redevelopment of the city launched several years earlier, which included a conference center, an

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1 – See [www.abercrombie.com](http://www.abercrombie.com)

2 – See [www.fondazioneprada.org](http://www.fondazioneprada.org)

international airport, a new subway and a plan to upgrade the banks of the Nervión River. Situated in a fringe space that could be described as a sort of *terrain vague*, the Guggenheim Museum has proved capable of reconstituting a recognizable character for the place, reinventing it from a *tabula rasa*. Part of the merit must go to its architectural, spatial and figurative qualities, undefinable except as part of the highly personal poetics of its designer.

*Policies.* And so the discourse expands to cover whole districts of the city, with the so-called *urban projects*. Entire urban areas subjected to profound processes of regeneration, aimed at the creation of extensive pieces of city developed over periods of time that can even be relatively short. Experiences of intervention in the compact city that distance themselves both from attitudes of mimicry and conservation of the characteristics of the historic city and from interventions that see sprawl as their primary principle of settlement. They are projects which attempt to systematize the different building, landscape and infrastructural components, and the occasion for them is often, at least in the initial stages, provided by political or economic opportunities, rather than urbanistic or architectural ones, by things like expositions, celebrations, programs of economic development or image building, sporting events, etc. In these cases the practice of the urban project represents not only a fundamental means of organizing all the actions needed to carry out the work, from policies to economic planning to programs, but also an element of synthesis that is of crucial importance for the creation of future opportunities that planning instruments are not by themselves able to provide or even envisage.

The architect is asked for a project that will be capable of imagining the different possibilities of use of the space according to various degrees of flexibility, of defining the symbolic and figurative value of the space through the architecture of the buildings and of revealing every possible relationship between the different parts of the structure and the city.

*Programs.* So what we are talking about is not just the design of space as such. The responses of the designer are also expressed in a broader and more inclusive *curatorial form*, attentive to the *processes of formation and the possible programs of use*. In the case of *Euralille*, for example, the directors of the management company viewed Rem Koolhaas as the curator, able to produce not so much a finished project as a morphological proposal regarded as a strategic means of controlling and verifying a more wide-ranging process of regeneration. It could be said to have been more of an urban vision than a genuine planning scheme, a sort of synthetic project able to express the meaning of the space irrespective of the individual

projects that would be implemented over time. Another interesting case is that of the Vila Olímpica in Barcelona, which solved the problem of accommodation for the athletes, but at the same time tackled the theme of the seafront and the reclamation of a series of beaches that had until then been neglected and were in a state of decay (Marinoni 2014). Many architects were called on to tackle different parts of the general layout designed by Martorell Bohigas MacKay Puigdomènech, so that each space was able to develop its own themes and figurative expressions with specific spatial identities not always completely in keeping with the relevant contexts.

*Estrangement.* For many of the cases cited it would be possible to speak of an approach to planning closer to the one taken by the product designer, a kind of *urban design* that in my view conveys better the sense of the estrangement of the project with respect to the space and local cultures. So the distinction between design, architecture and city breaks down, while the difference between the various modes of work and cultural references is maintained. Perhaps we might talk of a different sort of research into the form of the space with uses that have not been established for once and for all. Thus works of architecture that do not respond directly to functions, but if anything to uses that, as they develop in time, trigger processes of recomposition and even rearrangement of the space.

*Life.* So the decision-making strategies for the determination of programs of use take on fundamental importance. It is out of these that the categories of interpretation of space arise and, based on the experience of the people, shift the attention from the physical aspect of the city to the living one. We should no longer just be asking ourselves about how the formal structure of the city ought to be shaped. If anything we should be looking first and foremost at what its organizational structure might be, at its systems of connection and information, its propensity to favor processes and generate relations and its ability to ready itself for different conditions of use in order to create new and different opportunities.

*Process.* “The global city is not a place but a process” (Perulli 2007, 68). If then it is the process of formation that counts, i.e. the succession of actions that over time result in the proliferation of space, then architecture in itself is no longer the only category capable of shaping space, but represents just one part of a wider and more complex system of relations between questions of a different nature, in which the project of architecture comes increasingly to resemble a project of production, of organization. *Against*

*Architecture* is the title of the book by Franco La Cecla in which he explains the inferiority of architecture when compared with the intensity of daily life represented by actions, feelings and usages (La Cecla 2008). Spaces and things, today, want to escape from the fetters of their functions. They want to live more freely and no longer be described by their physical aspects alone, but by many other questions that do not specifically pertain to architecture, even if they have existed within it.

*Actions.* It is no coincidence that since the end of the last century there has been a proliferation of studies and of research and work groups investigating the spaces of the city whose focus has been more on actions than on space itself. Multiple and varied proposals of use such as the ones submitted every year to the competition *cheFare*<sup>3</sup> on the themes of collaboration, coproduction, innovation, economic and environmental sustainability, equity and communication. Hardly ever do the projects proposed make description of the form of the space in which the actions envisaged will take place a priority, but what is in fact suggested inevitably produces the spaces in which the actions occur. An equally interesting case is *Actions: What You Can Do with the City*,<sup>4</sup> which operates with a similar format. The idea is to put on show on each occasion 99 actions capable of bringing about positive changes in contemporary cities all over the world. Its organizers challenge participants to imagine new ways of using the city and its spaces, be they public or private, large or small, clearly defined or interstitial, through inventions understood as human drivers of change that can start out from any common action: walking, playing, putting on a performance, designing clothes, gardening, recycling, bringing agriculture into the city, furnishing open urban space, reutilizing abandoned buildings or decayed fabrics. Lastly, I would like to mention *NUB, New Urban Body*. This is the name of an exhibition recently staged at the Palazzo della Triennale in Milan. Its manifesto declared:

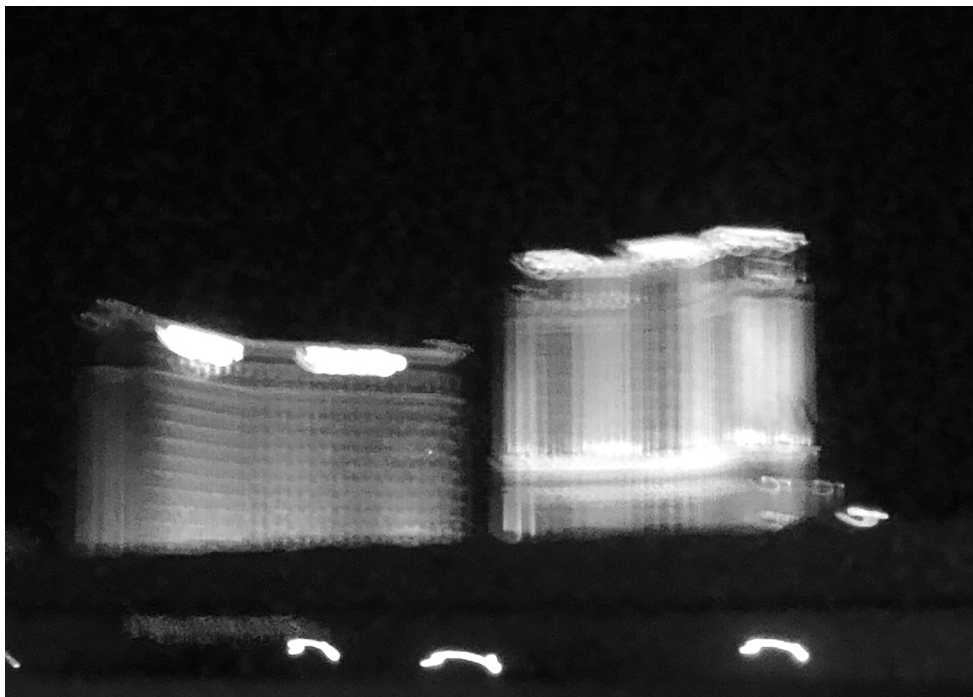
The current evolution in the ways in which people live, work, get together and use services is having a positive impact on the transformation of the city. More and more frequently we are finding ourselves face to face with multifunctional urban bodies that are able to respond in a flexible and adaptable way to our need to construct and manage our own daily program.<sup>5</sup>

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3 – See [www.che-fare.com](http://www.che-fare.com)

4 – See [www.cca-actions.org](http://www.cca-actions.org)

5 – See [www.triennale.org](http://www.triennale.org)



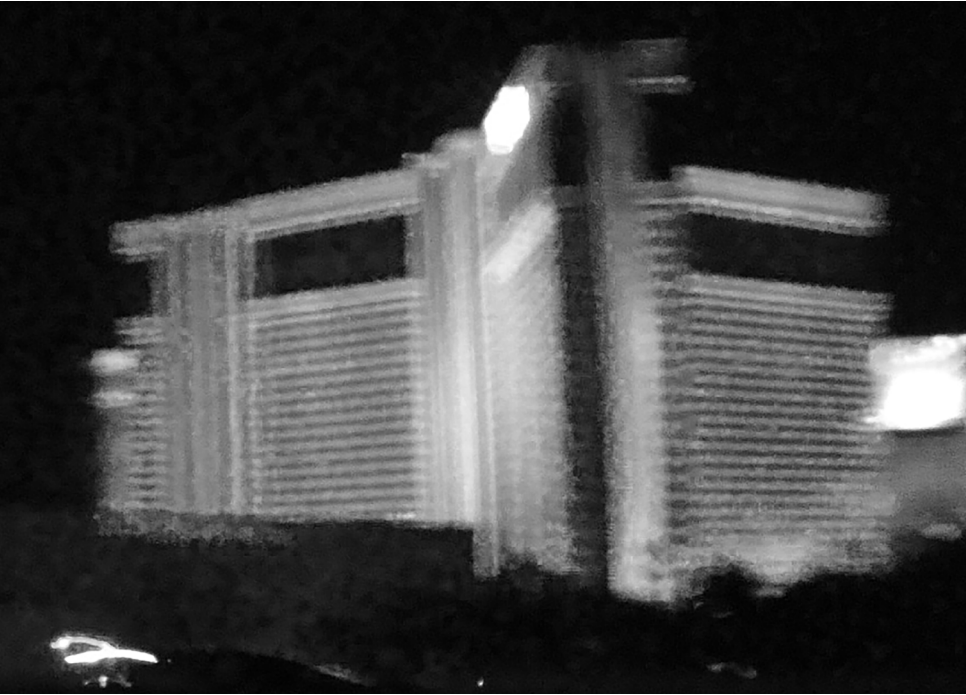
To the actions and new lifestyles of people corresponds a different way of using spaces, whose form is nothing but an inevitable consequence. The exhibition was interactive and obliged the visitor to approach it in a dynamic and proactive way. The catalogue is in the same style, as the curators have chosen not to present it on paper, but online and in interactive form, since fixing thoughts, actions and spaces in print once and for all would be contrary to the fluid and temporary character of any action.

*Professionalism.* But research along these lines does not stop at theory and, to cite the case of Italy alone, work groups able to provide genuine professional services to the various communities are growing increasingly significant. I will mention only a few of them here. One interesting example is Avanzi,<sup>6</sup> which has adopted the slogan *Sustainability in Action*. The group's aim is to support actions connected with social cohesion,

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6 – See [www.avanzi.org/it](http://www.avanzi.org/it)





urban regeneration, co-working, events of various kinds, natural resources and business innovation. Another is Temporiuso<sup>7</sup> a cultural association set up to promote projects for the temporary reuse of abandoned spaces in which associations, activists and researchers participate in various ways at the local and international level through the organization of workshops and groups to carry out research into the territory. And then there is Esterni,<sup>8</sup> which describes itself as a *cultural enterprise* that designs services, stages events intended to bring the community together and carries out campaigns of collective communication.

*Space.* At this point it has to be asked what will become of the real identity of space in such a complex and open situation, one in which not even

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7 – See [www.temporiuso.org](http://www.temporiuso.org)

8 – See [www.esterni.org](http://www.esterni.org)

architects are in a position to provide reliable and lasting definitions. In fact it has become difficult today to define the characteristics of the city with precision, as it had been possible to do in the past, basing the categories on vocations of a functional character, such as commercial, industrial, business or tourist activities (Perulli 2009). From this point of view we are witnessing an out-and-out process of hybridization that is evidently a response to the complexity of social relations today and to the complicated dynamics of planetwide exchanges of every kind: cultural, commercial, political, etc. Cities now host uses that cut across all sorts of boundaries and the space where actions are carried out no longer needs to be *typological*, but anything can happen even in spaces very different from one another.

*Location.* There is nothing surprising about the fact that the English term *location* has now entered the Italian language as a sort of transference of the notion of place. It is in any case a term that is used in Italian for spaces in which we meet as if we were in a square or any other public place of the city. And so various identities overlap and become interchangeable in the same spaces, proposed over and over again to the user in a kind of consumerist bulimia.

*Limits.* This is well explained by Serge Latouche, who says that, even though the human condition is comprised within limits, today “hyperconsumption frees us from any imperative other than consuming without limits” (Latouche 2012, 15)<sup>9</sup>, apparently going beyond and possible limit. And yet, continues Latouche, “(...) the denial of limits and the disdain for restraint today mean that limits and restraint resurface in the form of disasters (...)” (Latouche 2012, 16): disasters that can be natural, social, political and of any other kind. The paradox lies in the fact that, according to Latouche, contemporary unlimitedness is accompanied, *de facto*, by a reestablishment of innumerable limits that circumscribe our existence and that overlap with one another: from geographical limits to cultural limits, from economic ones to moral ones. So bounds are always present, indeed they have been reinforced and multiplied, but the difference with respect to the past is that they are laid one on top of the other in the same space and the same time, managing to coexist. Eleonora Fiorani has made the acute observation that the current state of affairs opens the way for:

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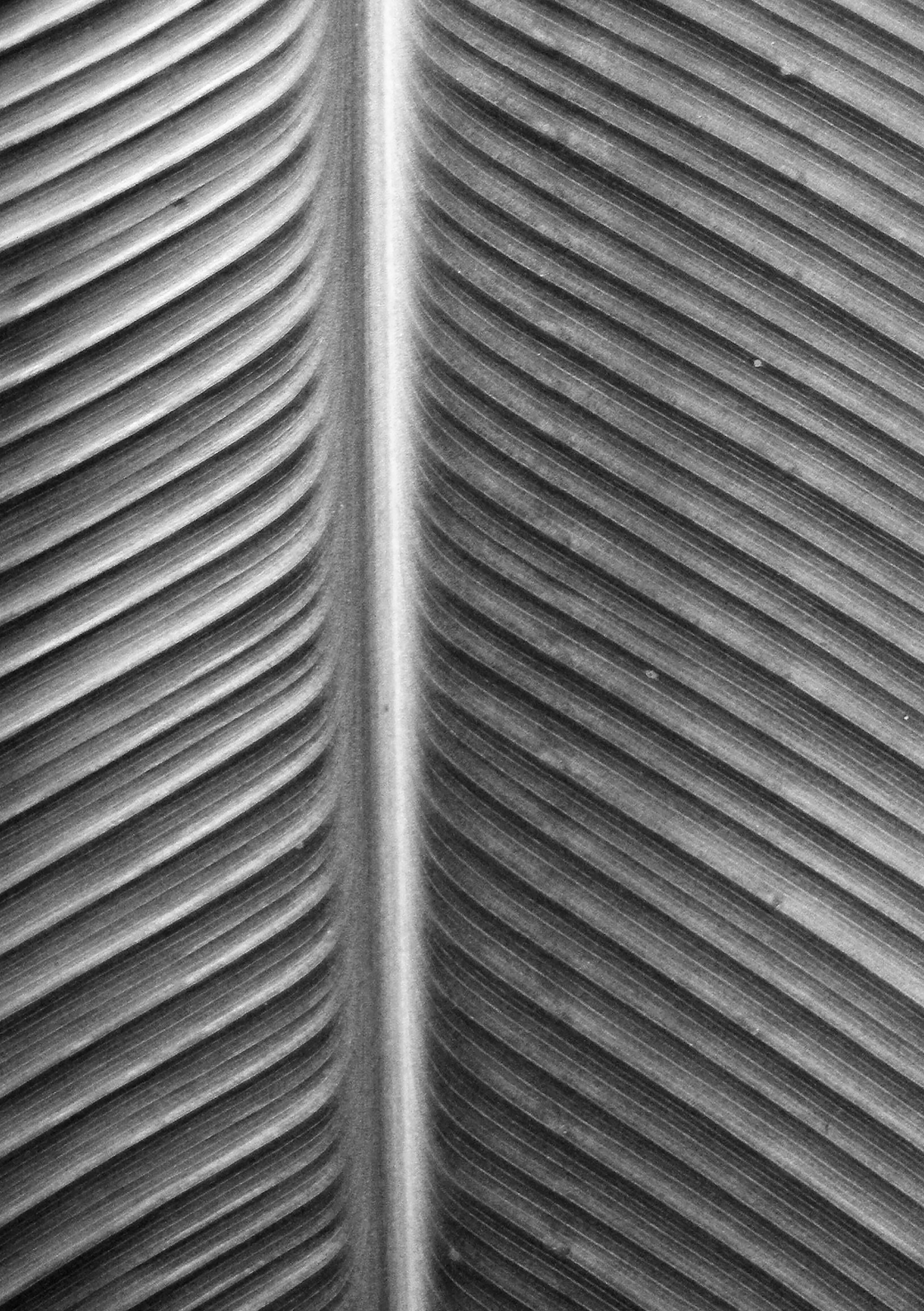
9 – The passage has been translated from the Italian edition

(...) a specific geography of globalization able to connect national situations beyond their borders and, therefore, to treat constructed spaces in terms of discontinuity in order to reconstruct them in new territories that do not coincide with the sum of their parts, but get their dynamics from the flows that pass through them and of which they are part. (Fiorani 2012, 19)

*Identity.* Thus spaces have a less and less stable form and it is difficult for architecture to express their constantly changing characteristics. And yet, however mutable or even immaterial the flows that pass through the city, whether of people or things, of finance or information, they always end up in physical places where any flow, be it material or immaterial, takes on a real form whose constitutive logic lies inevitably in architecture and its research into spatiality. Politics will get its answers from politics, economics from economics, sociology from sociology and architecture will have to go on getting them from architecture.

So the identity of a place is less and less, if it ever has been, a stable quality defined permanently and for all its different classes of users (residents, temporary residents, occasional visitors, simple voyeurs...). But at the same time the identity of a place remains strongly anchored to a static, formal and material dimension of a space that fixes a certain propensity of meaning thanks to its geographic location and its construction. Even the most immaterial of the terminals of access to a network in fact retains a form and produces a setting. For these reasons too, therefore, notwithstanding the proclamations of immateriality and the scaremongering about non-places, many of the static and unstable spaces that vibrate in the infinite “semiosis” of contemporary existence will continue to serve us as good and sound references in the “inner” geography of our lives. (Boeri 2011, 39)

*Research.* It is the paradox of our age. On the one hand everything has grown more fluid and blurred, while on the other it seems that this very vagueness is forcing us to come up with new forms of certainty. The city is characterized by the immaterial flows that pervade it and that by now represent the spaces of life of our existences, while inevitably we are still fond of the symbolic and emotional qualities defined by the material substance of architecture. But perhaps it is precisely from this necessity of the spirit that our research into space has to start over.



## Learning from the Vegetal World (with Plants) Inhabiting the Space

Francesca Berni

The vegetable world will be the lens through which to discuss the relationship between nature and the city, unfolding the landscape through the meaning of movement in space. To talk about the role of the plants in the city means once again thinking of our point of view regarding their position in the modification of metropolitan tissues. If every modification is linked to the movement and if today the plants are an even more important instrument than yesterday, we must open our understanding to different times and spaces of transformation. The suggestion is to look at plants as tools for understanding again the human scale on one hand and for articulating the city on the other, then there are two dimensions, the ethical and the technical one. In this sense, the garden is the device around which to articulate the design of public and public/domestic space because it is the urban place where this kind of work could be applied. If the plants are important to understand again the human scale, the movement is the first study field to develop the relationship between humans and plants because it is the element which links and discriminates the two parts. If the contemporary conditions call us to look at degrowth as the real context of application of our discipline, then it is certainly a slowdown that we should look to find tools of thinking about the city: the vegetable world and its way to be in the space should constitute a reference to see with different eyes concepts like identity, movement, modification, growth, adaptability. Here the garden is the urban device that transcribes the dialogue between city and nature.

There is no single answer about the origin of the city, but we can certainly say that the city is the way of the human being to inhabit the land. It brings in itself, with all the case contradictions, the eternal relationship

between culture and nature, unfolding over time through the history of civilizations. Going all over the streets or any urban environment, the presence of small or less small portions inhabited by spontaneous plants that have established their roots in fragments of abandoned or underutilized areas goes unnoticed. Civilization has always been measured with nature, and here we will discuss the contemporary role of plants and cities. Faced with an epochal change in the terrestrial balance, it is urgent to redefine the relationship between man and the environments and natural elements contained in metropolitan fabrics. So there will be two fields of discussion: one technical-practical, the other philosophical-theoretical, trying to frame their relationship in a project field that can re-discuss urban roles, using the tools of memory as active text and landscape as an expression of a collective.

### **Garden: Indirect reflections about the health of the public space**

When we go wandering in these loggias and gardens it is *we* who want to have translated into stone and plant, it is in *ourselves* that we want to walk. (Nietzsche 1882, 257)

The garden and the city belong to architecture, both express the inhabitation of man and the relationship between nature and culture. When I design or live in a garden, I build vertical and horizontal masses, work with light, wind, rain, shadow... Like the city, it is an element that has always existed in human cultures. Since its birth, that is since when the man began the cult of the earth, the elements of discussion are many. Water, plants, the city, the earth, the smells, the stars, the sky, the wind and the relationship of man with all these elements describe a field in which art, science, technology meet and mingle. A sort of vast place that suspends life from the city but contemporary contains the totality of rational manifestations of the human race; not only the transformation of the figure of the garden and more generally of nature in the city, but also the whole theoretical tradition that passes through its history, appears within its reflection. This constitutes a fundamental point of view regarding the evolution of ethics and aesthetics in human civilization. Nature, ordered by artifice, describes assets, declares social equilibria, as well as economics, draws poetics, gathering within itself the meanings and values that a society gives to *utilitas* and *venustas*. Describing its importance in the urban-economic settings, Maurizio Vitta speaks about Akhetaton, an ancient Mesopotamian city: he enhances the diffusion of the garden in all social strata, from the villas of the notables to the modest

dwelling of the artisans, underlining the anthropological and cultural value. It is rather a prolongation which presupposes a meaning increase of architecture in nature, or of this in that, as a cultural, daily necessity, and not only as an affirmation of caste (Vitta 2005, 24). A device that is an active part in the spatial organization of the city and that is constituted as a decipherable expression of the economies and social structures, as well as a potential instrument of active participation in the construction of a society. Speaking of the structure of the ancient Roman countryside from the republic to the empire, Jean-Robert Pitte states: "It is the result of the application of an elaborate tax system and of the profound conviction that it was necessary to integrate the human work into the cosmos and its laws" (Pitte 1983, 90). In modern times, gardens and parks become technical laboratories where it is possible to exercise and consolidate knowledge of engineering, architecture, and ecology: in particular, it is the England of the eighteenth century, that is in the history of the garden the first reference country for the modeling of soils, the ordering of hydraulic flows nevertheless linked to a precise aesthetic that finds its reflections in the narrative techniques of the literature of the time.

Equally important is the symbolic value of the garden, witnessed by the etymological vicissitudes of the word: Vitta describes them underlying the link between the words paradise and garden with the physical places of different cultures. The identification of the garden with the paradise was, therefore, the result of dense lexical exchanges between historically distant, but culturally similar, civilizations (Vitta 2005, 85). History of the city and history of the garden coincide and through the latter can be seen more clearly the health conditions of public space, here understood as a collective vision, a political project. The city would start from this forgotten instrument, to rediscover the design of itself, in the Italian case, the density of urban voids increases, of those areas in a state of neglect, where nature over time indicates a possible alternative route to wild allotments or conditions of complete inactivity. Public, open, domestic spaces are the places to look at to encourage practices and economies related to the cultivation of the garden as a slow urban infrastructure that can resurrect a shared, supportive and inclusive making city. In this sense, slowness is not to be understood as a different speed but as an invitation to move the gaze: the slow release that a garden policy can implicate, brings in itself a time of reconstruction of the public space culture extended beyond of the immediate result and tied to the proximity of the practices as of the things that allow them. The search for a city ecology consists in practicing a precise way of doing and thinking about architecture: the economic thinking that revolves around contemporary emergencies



(sustainability, public space, and infrastructures) cannot, therefore, circumvent the duration within the reflection on the time, slowness, and garden as a device of revival of the city.

The duration is the purpose with which we should embrace every project, a spherical dimension that has a center (present) and its surroundings (past, future), wide temporal resonance, which encircles the places it passes through, an active, thinking memory which rewrites the contexts looking beyond their center and using what it encounters, as a tool of interpretation and transformation of the places. Through the words of Ilaria Valente, it is possible to better understand the meaning of duration, therefore the role of architecture in our cities, as well as the given value to the figure of the garden in the project of the city. Regarding this concept it is highlighted its founding role in the architecture thanks to the connection that it establishes with time and space:

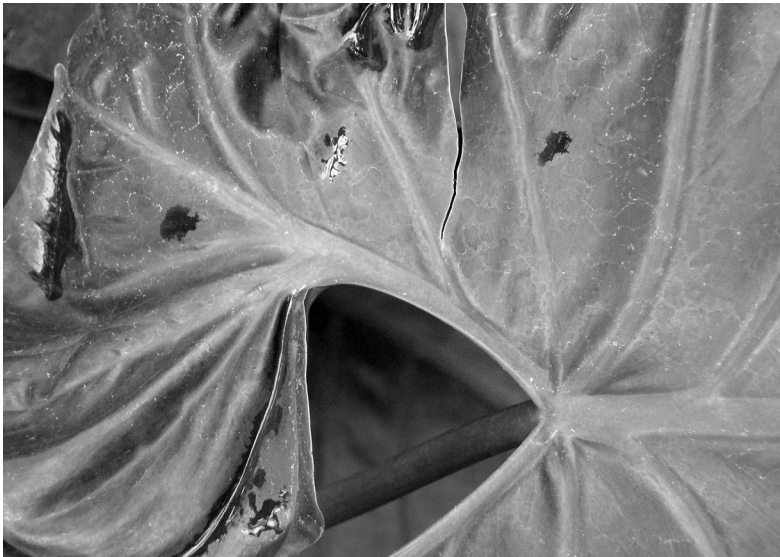
The question of duration can be interpreted taking into account two large sets of problems that are firmly interwind. On the one hand, we should consider the transformation dynamics of physical space, of the city, territories, landscapes, or contexts, the places where construction (and architecture) dominate. It is the operational horizon of the project, inextricably linked to the design and realization of the work itself. On the other hand, there is the very purpose of building, therefore establishing the paradigm of duration as foundational element of architecture. (Valente 2016, 181)

In this sense, the natural space within the metropolis becomes an instrument of thought, a complex book, an active writing through which to measure the human proportions between the earth sky and city.

### **Looking with slowness: The plants**

Some thoughts on how to save cities will be treated through a praise of the plants world understanding different ways of sensitivity and intelligence. The human existence (the human one as that of the whole animal world) is possible thanks to the presence of plants. By them entirely depends our possibility of existing and this aspect of the discourse should not only reduce the idea we have of the plant world but also that which regards the human race, trying to observe things, phenomena, contemporary conditions with a different eye and mind. Then let us suppose to question the order of primates, in order to understand how cities can once again constitute the home of man, understood as living being that lives in the land and how to avoid running into easy misunderstandings as regards the way to understand sustainability and ecology: recent results are visible





in any metropolis or large city, the misunderstanding of sustainability is evident by observing the presence of rather more globally oriented buildings than locally inspired ones. This environmental emergency is therefore linked to how we understand nature (plants), and artifice (the human figure and the city): in recent times harmful practices have been perpetuated, not directly related to the pollution or not to parts of the territory, but rather to what is meant by sustainability and ecology in the city. In *The Power of Movement in Plants* (1880), Charles Darwin deepens the ability of plants to manifest intelligence through movement. Talking about the importance of movement means tackling the issue of the ability to organize oneself in relation to external and internal stimuli, therefore it means talking about intelligence, whereby intelligence we mean that ability to solve problems. Talking about the importance of movement means tackling the issue of the ability to organize oneself in relation to external and internal stimuli, therefore, it means talking about intelligence, whereby intelligence we mean that ability to solve problems.

Intelligence is a property of life, something that must also be possessed by the humblest single-celled organism (Mancuso 2013, 112). Here it is not useful to repeat what many other recent scientific research has already demonstrated (the benefits to the human organism by the presence of plants or the great potential of phytodepuration mechanisms) but rather to describe the plants, slowing the observation time of the human eye, observing the dynamics, the phenomena, the movement; so proceeding, try to focus the attention on some aspects useful to the understanding of sustainability as something that should be practiced within the architectural project (also) with the participation of plants, which (useful to remember) should be treated according to their nature. The architectural project concerns the design of space inhabited by man, whether open or covered: it is incorrect to define a space as artificial or natural.

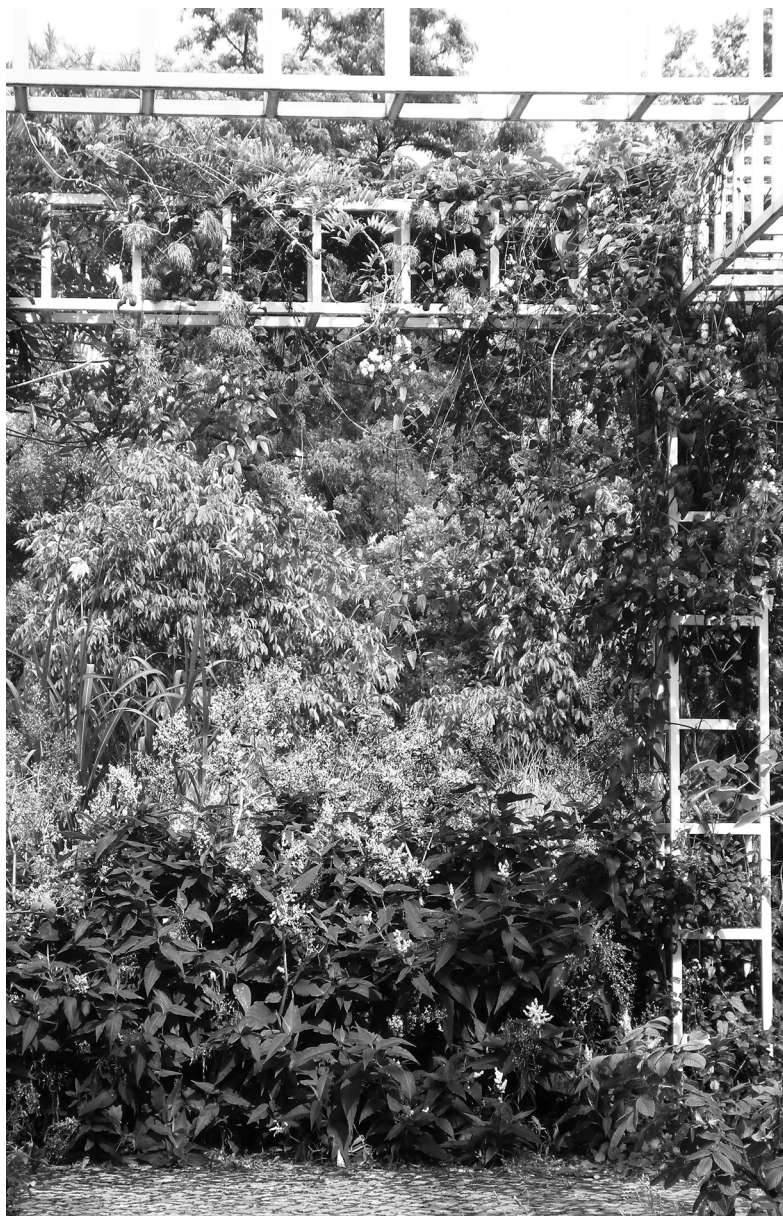
The artificial space is composed of natural elements, and the natural space presents artificial elements depending on the density of the anthropic presence. The space inhabited by man gathers both these spheres, and the task of architecture is to best reconcile them, looking at sustainability and durability as the founding pins of every formal choice. Urban green spaces should, therefore, be seen as part of the ecosystem's whole. Instead of discussing nature in the city it would be better to discuss the city in nature. This conceptual shift envisages that urban green spaces will include the rural environment of the city and possibly even more remote nature (Kos 2008, 131). With this conceptual shift, it is possible to describe another scale of the discourse, the plant as a vegetable element that inhabits the

space through its repetition and spread, crossing very different landscapes, from the more savage to the most urbanized. A plant is a modular system that repeats its parts, has no central organs or systems of organization: all the elements are useful but not indispensable, and this is the reason why it is not harmful to the plants to be cut off a part of the whole system. They are also sessile organisms, so they evolved completely differently from mobile living beings, building a modular body, devoid of single organs; it is a network structure not very different from that of the Internet. For several years science has demonstrated the existence of sensitivity and an ability to weave relationships with the environment that surrounds them.

The modernity of plants is soon demonstrated if we think of the Internet and the similarity between the work of social networks and that of the plants' world based on emerging properties, typical of superorganisms or intelligence of swarms. Our survival depends on plants (air and food) and, right now our existence in terms of energy production depends by fossil fuels that are the underground sediments of solar energy that plant organisms have set in the biosphere through photosynthesis. To become precious environmental devices, plants must, therefore, be equipped with a structure that allows their intelligence in terms of dialogue between the environment in which they settle and themselves. We can talk about five senses of plants if, as for the intelligence, we mean these as the ability to listen, see, feel, etc. Indeed, it is a matter of recognizing the quantity and quality of light, the main food along with water: plant modifies its position by growing and moving towards the sources of nourishment, elements that allow its photosynthesis, arranging its leaves and branches as well as possible. The type of photoreceptor changes according to the plant type anyway an intelligence is practiced in relation to its energetic function linked to the organism itself. If on the one hand, the leaves interact with the light, the roots behave in reverse: they seem to have a photophobic attitude. The entire plant is covered with mechanosensitive channels that use the air carrier to hear the vibrations of sound and the earth to hear not only the sounds carried in the form of vibrations but also those that have been called clink, or the rupture of superficial cells that would contribute to internal communication to the organism. The mechanosensitive channels with which the plant is covered, are also designed to have a sense of touch, and this can be demonstrated for example through the *Mimosa Pudica*,<sup>1</sup> which portrays its leaves as soon as you touch it. And then the smells, that

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1 – The *Mimosa Pudica* L. is a plant belonging to the *Mimosaceae* family or *Fabaceae* (according to the Angiosperm Phylogeny Group classification). It owes its common name to its ability to respond to tactile stimuli or vibrations by closing the leaves on themselves.





are mostly a mystery but we can define them as a kind of messages or indications that the plant sends to the outside, also to defend itself against the insects that eat the leaves. It is, therefore, a complex system, sessile, modular, and vascular, with a sensitivity and a capacity for interaction; this is demonstrated by the number of studies on the behavior of insects compared to plants. The relationship between the latter is governed by precise dynamics of ecosystem need, many still to be deciphered and discovered. It is a widespread and not centralized intelligence, in which all the cells constituting the body, collaborate in the existence of the plant with respect to the surrounding environment.

Various studies have shown (through the analysis of roots behavior) that plants are able to recognize nearby species and behave accordingly, or are able to collaborate with insects, in some cases adopting specific strategies to defend themselves (attracting with specific odors insects that can eat organisms harmful to the plant itself). Therefore, the intelligence of plants consists of a quantitative but not qualitative difference if we understand this as a phenomenon and not as a static object.<sup>2</sup> The first version of the Internet bears the name of Arpanet: initially it was designed to be modulated so that it could withstand a nuclear attack. Even if most of the computers were destroyed, the modular structure would have guaranteed the circulation of data as well as its survival: the structure and behavior are the same as that of plants. The predation of a part does not compromise the survival of the network itself. Here appears the first analogy with the city: it exists as a set of elements, an ensemble of auctions and knots if we describe it from an infrastructural point of view. An international team of scientists demonstrate that a behavior of a mold is comparable and assimilable to a real infrastructural city network.

Overall, we conclude that the *Physarum* networks showed characteristics similar to those of the rail network in terms of cost, transport efficiency, and fault tolerance. However, the *Physarum* networks self-organized without centralized control or explicit global information by a process of selective

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2 – A more complete picture on the intelligence of plants and the reasons for which greater attention should be given to them is provided by the research of Stefano Mancuso, a world-renowned scientist, professor at the University of Florence, director of the International Laboratory of Plant Neurobiology. The theories developed by him can be explored, as well as with hundreds of publications in international journals, through the following texts: *Verde Brillante. Sensibilità e intelligenza del mondo vegetale* (Mancuso and Viola 2013), *Uomini che amano le piante. Storie di scienziati del mondo vegetale* (Mancuso 2014) and, with Carlo Petri, *Biodiversi* (Mancuso and Petri 2015) and *Plant Revolution* (Mancuso 2017).

reinforcement of preferred routes and simultaneous removal of redundant connections. (Tero et al. 2009, 441)

Assuming this similarity as a proven scientific fact, it is possible to affirm the important reference that the vegetable world could be: someone could take offense but to save the city it is necessary to adopt the insect behavior and collaborate with vegetable plants to learn again how to inhabit the space.

### **Landscape infrastructure**

With the thoughts of Eugenio Turri and André Corboz, some reflections will follow to find again the measure of the self and the city. The movement is here treated as a fundamental part of the landscape and its definition. Besides bringing it in itself from an etymological point of view, it is present as a continuous and necessary phenomenon of ontological definition. The action, therefore, a word that some languages use to indicate the acting; the theater (*thàsthai*, to contemplate) becomes the way to tell a dialogue that has always existed. In the encounter between nature and culture, man acts in and on nature, modifying it. He is an actor who imagines, thinks and projects: he projects the action out of himself, generates a movement changing the space.

The landscape is the phenomenal manifestation intended as a theatrical act: the actor and the spectator establish here a relationship of existential necessity coinciding with the landscape itself. The movement generates and describes an epiphany and in this happening of things man bases the space in which he is, constructs himself with a recursive itinerary: the *autopoiesis*. This fits in with the formulas proposed by various scholars, so the landscape works, as already mentioned, by a *medium* of the human action in nature, as the first referent of such action (Turri 1998, 37). It is a gazing: action, projection, movement, sign, and contemplation. Any attempt to order these facts never seems to be quite exact.

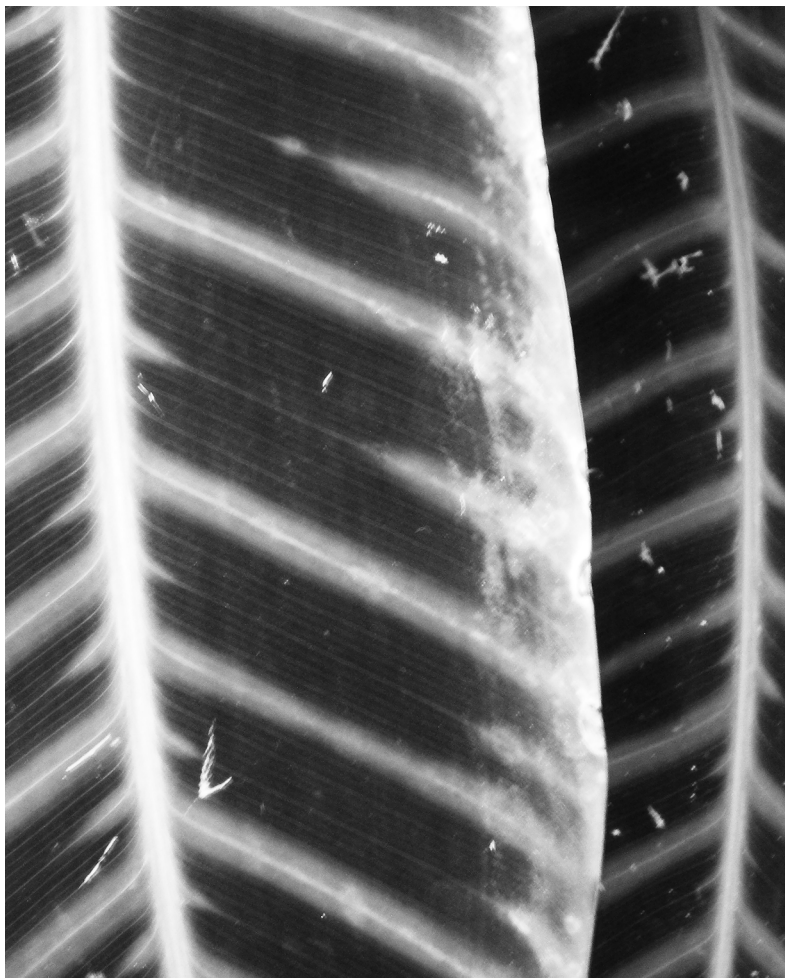
In any case, the act of looking at oneself, or rather of mirroring one's own ego in the landscape, builds over time our cultural identity. Double energy takes part within, and the actor-spectator consists of a single generative process that can always be called landscape. We inhabit the earth, and through living it we move, we mark it; by observing, we guess about the elements that have changed the set-ups, incremental modifications that are still in progress. It is a double movement of writing and reading the territory, it is a speech of man through the landscape (Turri 1998, 66). If the latter is a language, then it is possible to investigate a society, its

differences, its balance and read its features by interpreting and translating the features we observe: building a territory is an exact expression (impossible to grasp it by a definition) of the culture that determines it. In this sense we can, rather than give definitions, ask ourselves what is ethically desirable to do so that our inhabiting the world can be, on a scale conforming our being, linked to an active participation in the construction of a shared and inclusive culture. Moreover, through the landscape, one can judge a society, even if it is a silent stage. But how many things are understood about men, their recitation, their being as actors, that is, their material way of living and their culture, through the landscape, even if it is certainly not enough to enter deeply into the *animus* of a society (Turri 1998, 104). Thus, acting on the territory leaves a sign, it is inscribed, it is added to the existing tracks, it contributes incrementally to the slow formation of what in Great Britain has been called “reservoir of memories” (Turri 1998, 108). Memory is here to be understood as an active, speaking figure, to the extent that it is generated once again by an action, that of language: therefore, movement generates memory and memory prepares changes for subsequent movements. It is a story told by the dance, the only word that at the moment allows keeping space and time together.

Remaining on a dual scheme, André Corboz describes the modification of the territory as the acting (or the reacting) on the one hand of spontaneous processes of change, on the other hand as the succession of human interventions that modify it: this dynamic dialogue can otherwise be called project. This need for a collective relationship lived between a topographic surface, and the population settled in its folds allows us to conclude that there is no territory without the imaginary of the territory (Corboz 1983, 181). And if, as a project, the territory is semanticized then it has a form, and it is a form which, obviously, is said not to be geometric (Turri 1998, 182).

In its indefinability in quantitative terms, the territory can, however, be interpreted and we can, attribute a (cultural) value to its configuration: there is a consistency, a thickness, it is made of layers that over time and space overlapped, intersected, juxtaposed. Over time, they change their meaning, as well as their structure, depending on those who interpret them, inhabit them and build them. The territory is made up of signs and memories, visibility and invisibility, processes that act, landscapes that appear. It is full of meaning, never completely decipherable in its totality, a place full of things and thoughts. It is not always possible to fully understand what or who has generated what is there, however, the knowledge, or better, the will to know is certainly the first tool to be used

for any intervention in the territory. The territory extends *there*, always different from what I know, I perceive, I want it. Its dual manifestation of environment marked by man and place of privileged psychic relationship suggests that Nature, always considered in the West as an external and independent force, should rather be defined as the field of our imagination (Turri 1998, 191).





## Conclusion

The design action generates a permanence, which is inserted in a palimpsest (an active text, therefore), of which it is important to read the processes that constitute it and generate it. The gesture and the sign together definitively confirm the indissoluble link between movement in space and permanence in time. Geography is the writing of the Earth, referring to its cartographic representation. However, similar reasoning can be transposed to the territory and its construction: the memory-sign, also interpretable as an infrastructural artifact, is a tectonic element, or part of the earth's memory, it becomes writing (Gé, visible). The language-action generates it: the gesture is ephemeral, and it is not visible, except through the sign and the graphemes that flow from it. But unlike what happens for the symbol, Hegel explained, the connection between expression and meaning is completely arbitrary, in the sense that it is external and formal (Farinelli 2010, 28). In this sense, the writing of the Earth tells an absence, the distance that exists between what remains and the thing that generated it: the ethics of absence thus becomes the real field of discussion about project and city.

In the expression planetary garden I limit myself to make the planet similar to the garden referring to the principle of closure to which they are referable. The first since ever: garden comes from Garten, enclosure. The second one, since the scientific ecology revealed the finiteness of life on the planet, making the limits of the biosphere appear like those of the new enclosure. (Clément 1991, 150)

Even if it is not explicit, the project is in the center of the essay and carries, disposes of, unfolds around itself the things necessary for its definition, but even affirm a behavior, a way to be the city we inhabit. The plants, the garden and the movement synthetically are the three elements through which to explore, with a repositioned look, the modification of the city: the plants, as vegetal inhabitants from which to learn different times and ways to approach the space, the garden as a potentially revolutionary urban device and finally the movement as the tool that draws the act (here intended as the way to be) of humans on earth.



## Ride the City A New Way of Living the City and its Unexpected Places

Veronica Ferrari

The history of the bicycle has always been linked to the history of the modern and contemporary city. The bicycle was one of the first popular means of transport to circulate around the city and in recent years has returned to the crest of the wave not only as a means of transport, but as a design object, an emblem of fashion and technology.

The architects of the twentieth century were very interested in the myth of the automobile, their experimentation included a car-based utopia, thus planning the expansion of our cities through neighborhoods designed to accommodate vehicular mobility.<sup>1</sup> Today the expansion of the cities has stopped and the needs of the city are different. The theme of land consumption and the new needs of the planet lead us to rethink these utopias in a current key. Taking into account current requests, a utopian bicycle city, as it was the city of the car, could be a pilot model in defining

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1 – Le Corbusier, formulated some theories on the myth of the automobile. In the collection of writings published in 1922 *Vers une architecture* Le Corbusier assimilates the Greek temple to the car, the Parthenon at the Delage grand Sport. The similitude regards the process that led to the realization of the monument as to that of the automobile, the same approach ‘to doing’ binds the classical construction, symbol of the past to the car, a technological object symbolically linked to the future.

The architect Frank Lloyd Wright, from the thirties, formulates the idea of a new society based on the architectural model of the *Broadacre City*. This model uses the car and the new communication technologies as a means of connecting city and countryside. The car is the means that allows you to move from one place to another quickly and structure the new expansion of the city.

strategies and in designing new neighborhoods and new cities. As Rem Koolhaas explains, speaking about “the culture of congestion”, some city models have the power to transform almost non-existent opportunities into tangible and real opportunities for social development and interaction.<sup>2</sup> So, cities with a well-defined territorial structure and morphology can also enclose new opportunities for transformation and adaptation to the needs of a new myth. As Carlo Ratti, director of MIT Senseable City Lab,<sup>3</sup> an architect and engineer expert on urban mobility projects, including the *Copenhagen Wheel*,<sup>4</sup> says, we have the right to think and imagine the cities of tomorrow, according to our needs, without complexes, provided that the goal is progress, where technologies will play a fundamental role.<sup>5</sup>

The new utopian city will have to put together those interventions that are called top-down as the realization of infrastructures for slow mobility, bike-sharing services, closing days for vehicular traffic and bottom-up initiatives, coming from citizens and city users as critical mass movement, shared-cycle workshops, cycling advocacy, bicycle tours and group excursions organization.

To support the emergence of the new utopia, it is necessary to understand the true value of sustainable mobility from those of collective benefits such as the improvement of air quality, the reduction of cardiovascular diseases, obesity, diabetes and hypertension and, consequently, reducing national health expenditure and health benefits: the constant effort of the pedaling oxygen keeps the muscles of the lower limbs and the respiratory system active. The collective benefits have not only health effects, but also

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2 – Rem Koolhaas deals with the “culture of congestion” in his book *Delirious New York, A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* published in 1978, where the architect analyzes Manhattan and uses it as a metaphor for the wide variety of human behavior.

3 – It is a scientific laboratory that studies how digital technologies are changing the way people live and their implications on an urban scale. Founded and directed by Carlo Ratti in 2004, the Department of Studies and Urban Planning of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

4 – Copenhagen Wheel is a device that can be applied to any bicycle turning it into a hybrid vehicle. It uses the energy of the wheel that is idling or used in a brake, stores it in the batteries and reuses it when needed to make a climb or recovery less tiring. The wheel is equipped with GPS locator and other devices that allows it to be always connected with a smartphone or other devices like that.

5 – Carlo Ratti explains his theory about the city of the future in the publication *The City of Tomorrow: Sensors, Networks, Hackers, and the Future of Urban Life* published in 2016. Ratti in the book argues that the city of the future, their design and evolution will be consistently based on technological progress.

effects on the economy of families with a reduction in costs dedicated to the car, on economic policy such as reducing energy dependency and saving non-renewable resources. The bicycle is a *social* vehicle, symbol of the democratization of mobility, autonomy, accessibility and ecology. Cycling is probably the cheapest form of transportation that exists today and you do not have to pay for parking. The bicycle

more than many others (means of transport) is a measure of slow territory, it allows us to go through spaces without leaving us indifferent. The sweet speed of the bike allows us to experience the landscape in an intimate manner, dwelling on what is taking us around and noticing what, at a greater speed, would lose definition until it disappears. The speed of the bicycle reveals a new landscape to everyone. (Pileri 2015, 5)

Time, in the use of the bicycle, is a very important variable, in terms of perception and assimilation of space as narrated by Paolo Pileri, in terms of displacement: cycling often can be much faster than using the car.

Numerous cities around the world, for different reasons and with different approaches, are committed to improving slow and cycling mobility. This is the case of Amsterdam, a city that chose bicycles since 1973, from when there was an oil crisis and bicycle became the protagonist. For Netherlands, now, the bicycle is not only a means of transport but a cultural issue, a way of life. The city of Chicago with the *River Ride* is planning a 10 kilometers long floating cycle path to easily and safely cross the city linking the Horner area to Ping Tom. The *River Ride* aims to promote slow mobility and increase the number of urban cyclists in the city. Even in the East, the culture of slow mobility is developing, the Government of Singapore plans to revitalize bicycle mobility with the realization of 700 kilometers of cycling routes by 2030. In Italy, the city of Siracusa with “Siracusa city green” wins in 2017 the Urban Award.<sup>6</sup> The merit of this project is the engagement of a cultural revolution through a complex sustainable mobility project that integrates bike sharing, carpooling, bike lanes, pedibus and electric buses. An in-depth territorial study and a needs analysis are the basics for establishing sustainable design solutions and interventions aimed at improving the quality of city life.<sup>7</sup>

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6 – Italian Prize part of the Green Road Awards, a prize that aims to enhance all forms of sustainable tourism and Italian cyclopedonian paths to make them known to the general public. ([www.igraw.bike](http://www.igraw.bike))

7 – Many of the cities described above are case studies treated and detailed by Steve Fleming in the book *Cycle Space: Architecture and Urban Design in the Age of the Bicycle* published in 2012. In this book, Fleming dedicated a chapter to each city, associating it with a key word that summarizes its relationship with sweet mobility. For example, he uses the word “Practical” for Amsterdam, “Free” for Singapore, “Green” for Chicago and so on.



## **Bicycle: A new way of living the city**

Now a real urban revolution is needed. Cycle paths can be a tool to involve and re-inhabit abandoned realities. To do so it is necessary to think of a well-founded strategy: identify places and make sure people approve them, creating a usable network. It is also necessary to have a better compatibility between the structure of urban centers and bicycles and cars. The theme of movement within urban spaces is essential because living in the city means moving inside it, reaching social spaces, working environments, schools, parks, museums, stations, supermarkets and so on.

The paths, the network of habitual or potential lines of movement through the urban complex, are the most potent means by which the whole can be ordered. The key lines should have some singular quality which marks them off from surrounding (channels) (...). These characters should be so applied as to give continuity to the path. (Lynch 1985, 96)

The qualities of Kevin Lynch are identified in a precise spatial quality, the presence of a function or activity along their development, the use of certain materials, the presence of vegetation or not, etc. The presence of attributes can be the pretext for developing a more complex lightweight infrastructure system. The bicycle is a strongly identifiable instrument and a symbol of a smart sustainable city. It is essential to make cycling a system with some continuity of paths and get a growing network related to sustainable mobility activities.

The use of bicycles cannot, however, become the only possibility for the cities of the nearest future. “The future of sustainable urban mobility is entrusted to a skillful mix of public transport systems on iron and road (with vehicles equipped with eco-friendly propulsion systems), pedestrian mobility and cycling mobility” (Bozzuto 2016, 28). It is necessary and interesting to develop an interdependence between different means of transport and different components: in urban space, mobility provides order and reconnection, green gives quality and regeneration to the environmental system. The presence of greenery can be the conductor that accompanies light infrastructures and helps them to fit into a heavily densified context.

The light infrastructures and the greenery are also elements that together can re-connect the city and the natural landscape, becoming a rural path in the middle of fields. Cyclotourism is becoming an important phenomenon in Italy and the sites of this activity are not just designed cycling paths, but also spontaneous, historical or agricultural paths. Cyclotourism was born as a form of travel for a short vacation, a slow way to discover the landscape in absolute

respect for nature. The basic premises for cyclists are a continuous, safe and visually pleasing road, with some services that follow along its development, such as bike shops, hostels, restaurants and a good deal of cultural heritage. As Ernest Hemingway wrote in the notes of the writing of one of his greatest and most famous novels, the *Old and the Sea* (1952), it is only by riding a bike that you learn the contours of a country better, because you have to sweat on the hills and go downhill in the descents. Only in this way you remember how they really are, while in the car you remain impressed only the highest hills, and you do not have a very accurate memory of the country you have crossed in the car as you have been cycling on it. It is therefore essential to imagine a wide-sighted city network that develops out of the city capillary throughout the territory to ensure its full fruition. This is not an unattainable condition, but an overview and a collective effort are needed to make it possible. The bicycle allows to really know the essence of a place.

The bicycle, for those who risk using it in the city for the first time, is the opportunity for an unprecedented experience: it allows re-evaluating distances and following routes that are impossible for public transport following fixed itineraries. Cycling does not impose changes, coincidences must not be expected. It almost secretly slips into another geography, absolutely and literally poetic, an occasion for immediate contact between places normally frequented separately, and which thus becomes a source of spatial metaphors, unexpected confrontations and short circuits that never cease to stimulate with the force of calf the revived curiosity of the passers. (Augé 2009, 40)

Cycling is always a new experience. It means to feel the space, the streets, the places, in a different way, with new eyes. The use of bicycle is also a mass cultural phenomenon:

On New Year's Eve 2011, tens thousands of Taiwanese have simultaneously taken their bicycles to set the world record for the largest number of mass-ride participants. A local newspaper calculates were 72,019; another counted 114,606. In both cases, it was the right record for the country hosting the Giant, the world's largest bicycle manufacturer. (Hamilton 2017, 176)

It is very common, especially in big cities, during evening hours, to clash with a swarm of cyclists, cyclists who participate in the critical mass,<sup>8</sup> a gathering of bicycles that invades the streets and makes them their own

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8 – Critical mass is a movement, a gathering of bicycles, usually a citizen, which provides collective rides along the streets of the city. it is a spontaneous event without formal organizational structure. The first critical mass was held in 1992 in California, in the city of San Francisco.



for a few minutes. A large group of cyclists can stop or divert car traffic for a few moments, and this is the lesson to be learned from critical masses: one alone cannot do anything, together you can fight, even if for a short while, the whole system. The bicycle is a phenomenon that unites people because it allows them to express themselves and use the bicycle in the way they prefer, to move, to do sports, to have fun, all in the respect of themselves and the world around us.

### **How can the bicycle transform the city (or how can the city transform itself for the bicycle)**

Mobility is at the first place of smart city goals. The primary goal of sustainable mobility is the rapid, inexpensive, stress-free movement. Fundamental to this is the presence of efficient intermodal mobility, which also allows to load bicycles on buses and subway in their spaces.

What are the tools that can help the use of bicycles as a prevalent transportation within cities and their suburbs? The intervention modes are organized into different categories such as economic, social, cultural, political, planning or design initiatives.

To create a bicycle-sized city the design must be global and also a little dreamy. We have to come to the view that it is necessary to design radical, and non-fragmented interventions, to create a real cycling network. This network must be designed according to the needs of citizens and cyclists. People need the “development of flexible, adaptable, and resistant (social, physical and institutional), and can be both actively and proactively adapted to changing frameworks conditions” (Schiappacasse and Müller 2015, S14). Cyclists need safe paths to move freely. New bicycle paths must be designed in terms of quality, with the addition of green areas along most of the sections with the aim of improving human health and the whole cycling experience.

Furthermore, the nature of the place and the city is an important evaluation point for a reflection on the use of the bicycle. The conformation of the territory can incentivize or otherwise demotivate the daily use of the bicycle. Many cities have flat land, an example is the city of Amsterdam, built on a portion of artificially dried and drained land. The flat nature of the territory, together with the small size of the city, strongly encourages citizens to use the bicycle as the main means of transport because the movements with the creation of cycle lanes with their own road sections or separate from the road for cars safely, crossroads with priority areas for bicycles, with dedicated and well-marked cycling crossings are fast

and not really tiring. In cities such as Lisbon or San Francisco, where the slopes are significant and the use of the bicycle is strongly limited by morphology, it is easier to find alternative transport such as funicular networks, public lifts, and tramways on which to load the bicycles.

In some cities it is possible to rethink and remodel the historic center and not only in terms of pedestrians and cyclists in an almost natural way, in other cases where the presence of cars is overwhelming it is difficult to introduce space dedicated to the bicycle. In cases where it is necessary to take away space from car traffic, the choices to be made are sometimes very difficult. Is it possible to find a compromise between the request for bike accommodation and car needs? Surely, where space is limited and already heavily designed, it will be difficult to give portions of cities to cycle mobility, but with a good operation of – *size* and *sewing* – and redistribution of weights it will be possible to achieve the coexistence of every type of mobility desired.

A good portion of citizens is calling for changes to more environmentally friendly, cheaper and, above all, less time-consuming modes of transport. You do not need much space for cycling in the city, you can propose to reduce the width of the wider carriageways, thus reducing the speed of cars and facilitating the crossing of pedestrians. The space required for a cycle infrastructure can also be created without the road sections being reduced, going into interstitial spaces of the city, alongside the tram tracks along the green urban avenues.

To change the city, not only tangible, but also abstract interventions such as the modification of the highway code are needed: the introduction of – “contradictions” – for cyclists in one-way streets is an effective measure to encourage the use of the bicycle, regulated and safe. The cities giving space to cyclists increase urban quality and attractiveness. The cycle paths will gradually become a part of the city rules, around which sporting activities, dedicated services, pedestrian and cycling leisure sites will spontaneously arise. It is important to stimulate the creation of dedicated structures, real symbolic activities of the bicycle culture as it did in Calgary, Canada, with the Peace Bridge,<sup>9</sup> an exclusively cycling crossing structure, or as

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9 – The Peace Bridge is a cycle-pedestrian bridge born from the need to connect the Bow River area with Calgary center to ensure the transition to the growing number of people moving to the city for work. The path was designed by architect Santiago Calatrava and inaugurated in 2012. The new bridge is located on the south side of the river. The 126-meter long (413 feet) and 8-meter wide (26 feet) with a total height at 5.85 meters (19 feet) bridge structure is embedded as a sculptural, yet mathematically-derived element into a naturally landscaped surrounding and its sculptural appearance generates a striking contrast with the surrounding landscape (from <https://calatrava.com/projects/peace-bridge-calgary.html>).



the 8TALLET homes<sup>10</sup> built in Copenhagen (2009), where people who live in them can ride bicycling just outside the doorstep through a continuous cycling ramp that runs along the gardens and the balconies of the buildings themselves. The culture of sustainable mobility must be an important part of city planning processes, not just in large-scale but also in small-scale. Bike design can become an engaging part of design, a creative and experimental section of design of open space and urban furnishings. Through the study of versatile and sustainable solutions, it will be possible to design real objects such as bicycle racks, staircases, benches dedicated to cyclists or concrete spaces such as parking areas and bike sharing stations.

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10 – 8TALLET (the number 8) is the name of the family houses and community designed by Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG). The 8 House has two sloping green roofs with a height over 1700 m<sup>2</sup>, which are strategically placed to reduce the urban heat island effect as well as to visually tie it back to the adjacent farmlands towards the south. The shape of the building allows for daylighting and natural ventilation for all units. In addition, rainwater is collected and repurposed through a storm water management system (from <http://www.big.dk/#projects-8>). The project won the prize at the World Architecture Festival for the Housing category in 2011. Around the complex it develops a ramp one kilometer long that curls around the building and connects it with the city.

The new utopian city of the bicycle feels the need to change according to its inhabitants, but not exclusively morphologically and formally. What must be radically modified is the cultural substrate. To induce a city to become a supporter of sustainable mobility and cycling mobility, it is necessary to cultivate, raise awareness, educate young people and at the same time provide them with all the tools necessary to send the message. Examples of good practice show bicycle access everywhere in the city, producing and distributing maps of bicycle paths, establishing or enhancing bike sharing and bicycle rental, providing resting areas and parking areas specially designed for cyclists. Bicycle use is increasingly a social phenomenon and communication plays a key role in promoting its development. Through information and social media sites it is possible to show all the bike-friendly initiatives and events planned by the city, it is possible to communicate the appointments of temporary cyclists or to plan mass-cycling with weekly schedule, in real time and in a totally accessible way.

## Conclusion

To make our cities fit for pedestrians and bicycles, it is not needed a radical change in the urban structure but just an adaptation of it. Every city must try to understand its potential in terms of space, mobility and service offerings. The easiest and most immediate way is to try to learn from the virtuous cities, like the cities of northern Europe, Amsterdam and Copenhagen, but also american models like Portland and Chicago, trying to understand their best practices, studying their modification mechanisms and their urban strategies.

At national level, it would be possible to start from smaller cities, where management is easier, and then involve more developed urban centers. For some cities, the process of modification will be simpler, for others more difficult, but it is essential to plan a development based on medium-long term programs to ensure a gradual change and not a complete distortion of the way of enjoying the city. In order to be able to transform our cities safely and effectively, in terms of environmental, economic, social, mobility and health, a drastic change of mentality is needed. Is there a shift in mentality in our cities in favor of a mobility policy that respects the urban environment? For now, certainly not.

Mobility is a matter of mentality. A battle for a model of cities characterized by sustainable mobility requires large information campaigns for all citizens, from pedestrians to drivers and the improvement of the image of cyclists. "The process of identifying, conceptualizing, gathering support for and ultimately realizing urban renewal schemes while giving primacy at every stage to the bike rider needn't be to the exclusion of the non-cyclist" (Fleming 2016, 154). Because the creation of an open mentality to

cycling is essential, as Fleming said, even people who are not cyclists can become part of a common identity in favor of cycling.

For cities, it is necessary to let people know cycle facilities and arrangements for soft mobility planned or just carried out by the municipality, thus demonstrating the interest in ecology and the strong consideration of cyclists by those who govern the city. It is important to underline the economic interest that bicycle use represents for companies, from the production of bicycles themselves to the creation of new jobs for those who design, build and maintain efficient services related to cycle mobility. To promote the use of the bicycles and create a sensitive mentality, numerous initiatives can be organized; the arrangement of circuits and bike tours through the city highlights the possibility of experiencing the pleasure of riding a bike in your city.

Fundamental is that the new mentality is shared by everyone, from municipalities to citizens. The establishment of collaborations between public administrations, businesses, cyclists' associations and citizens can create a network of mass events to support the cycle mobility useful to make known the advantages of cycling and to involve everyone in the first person.

In the utopian city of the bicycle we will see “a flourishing of cycling along the networks of land or of waterways that precede the road network” (Fleming 2016, 149). This will only happen if we look to the future with new eyes, aware of the needs of the contemporary city and its citizens.

**“It is necessary to create access systems to the regenerated areas with a great quality of pedestrian and cycle connectivity for the spaces that were previously isolated. This type of connectivity is fundamental and it is clear that all of this can only be achieved through global thinking, thus not limiting the interventions to the area of interest, but extending the network of cycling to the whole city, creating a large capillary system functionality and attractiveness”**

**(Stefano Boeri)**

## Interview to Stefano Boeri

### Stefano Boeri Architeti

Veronica Ferrari

The issue of abandoned railway stations and their rehabilitation within the existing urban fabric is currently much discussed and subject to reflection by various actors, from public administration, to private companies, to designers and competent technical professionals. The contemporary city continuously develops new needs in terms of public space and *green systems* such as parks, gardens, in particular related to light infrastructure and intermodal and sustainable mobility.

Stefano Boeri, today one of the most famous Italian architects in the world thanks to projects such as Bosco Verticale<sup>1</sup> realized in the Isola district in Milan, has shown to be very sensitive and purposeful on this question. The architect Boeri carries out research and development on urban reforestation projects through the use of nature as a design element and the vertical densification for the liberation of the soil, projects in favor of environmental sustainability, biodiversity, land consumption and resources and technological innovation.

Stefano Boeri Architeti, along with four other international architecture firms, at the invitation of the company Sistemi Urbani<sup>2</sup> and the municipality of Milan, expressed his vision on the issue of the recovery and reconversion of abandoned railway stations. The subject, pending the program agreement between the Municipality, the Region and the

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1 – Bosco Verticale is a project completed in 2014, by Stefano Boeri Architeti. The project consists in two residential towers with facades completely covered with arboreal essences.

2 – FS Sistemi Urbani is a company that aims to enhance the assets of FS Italian that are not functional to railway operations, with particular reference to stations, to nodal and transport infrastructures and to available assets.

Ferrovie dello Stato company, is very important not only for Milan and Italy, but also in the European urban planning debate.

**What will be the role of disused railway stations in the Milanese metropolitan landscape? And what is the scenario to prefigure for these spaces?**

The Milanese railway stations cover an area of approximately 900,000 m<sup>2</sup>. My personal belief is that not less than 90% of these square meters, should be destined to public areas and permeable green, with a concentration of available massing, according to an index that is around 0.65 as required by the Plan drawn up by the municipality of Milan. What is envisaged is a discontinuous scenario, which changes according to the different areas and the market's attractiveness. The volume will focus on the edges, with a system of buildings that is extremely permeable on the ground, thus favoring interaction between the city, the city's nodes and the new intervention. The *new city* will rise upwards, where possible, and will be designed above all to host spaces for young people, so as to transform Milan into a city that can offer, not only services, but also a good perspective on life over the long-medium term. It is necessary to think about the introduction of mixed typologies, a sort of *buildings city* that contain a great functional variety: residences, offices, clinics, artisans with residence, places of worship, etc.

**We have seen a possible configuration of the volumes, about the open space, what are the conditions and viable solutions to mend the former railway stations and the city?**

Regarding the theme of open space at first there is the question of the treatment of the track belt. It is necessary to imagine a continuous coverage, where possible, in the active band of tracks and a complete decommissioning of the inactive band. The coverage of the active strip of tracks could allow the construction of a system of large natural spaces consisting of parks, hills, meadows and woods. This is what the city of Milan needs, bringing a large dimension of naturalness within a dense and highly built urban fabric. The challenge is to find connections at the passage of architectural scale, and to continue through linear green systems that utilize the unused tracks, when possible the railroad protection bands, and when the railway track is not possible to give continuity to these large green areas. Thinking overall it is possible to establish a sequence between the airports, from the largest Farini railway station, Porta Romana, Porta Genova etc., and also involving the north-west side of the city, incorporating the Bovisa district into the project and continue to the Expo area.



**How can we proceed and what are the sustainable solutions to be adopted in an urban regeneration process focused on the recovery of these areas?**

It is essential to integrate the green element, clean energy – from an underground geothermal ring – and sustainable mobility, and to image a different system of connections. The idea is to have a band of active tracks, a circle-line, a user guaranteed by a sort of tram-train, a high-tech public vehicle that can go on tracks which succeeds then to cover every quadrant of the city, so as to close the circle of mobility. I have already stressed the need to create a network of sustainable mobility and intermodal transport, combining the use of public transport to private vehicles such as cycling. It is necessary to create access systems to the regenerated areas with a great quality of pedestrian and cycle connectivity for the spaces that were previously isolated. This type of connectivity is fundamental and it is clear that all of this can only be achieved through global thinking, thus not limiting the interventions to the area of interest, but extending the network of cycling to the whole city, creating a large capillary system functionality and attractiveness.



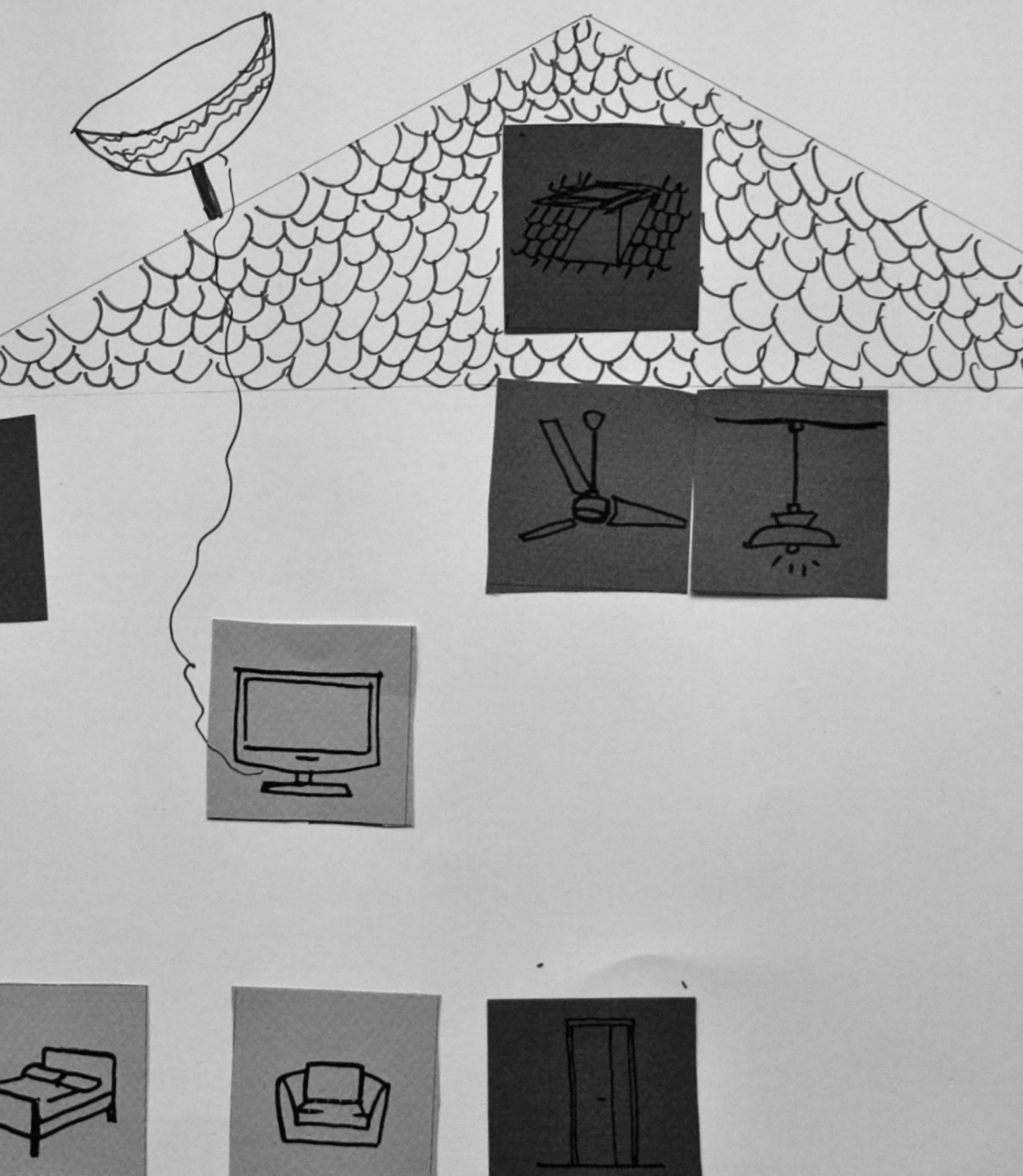
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VIA GELATINO N°05



## Psychology in the City

### From Subjective Experience to New Urban Identities

Paolo Inghilleri, Nicola Rainisio, Marco Boffi

The relationship between Psychology and the city has more than a century of life, as it can be traced back to the early analysis of the behaviour of urban masses (Le Bon 1900) and to the theories of Simmel on the psychological distinctiveness of the citizens at the beginning of the twentieth century (1903). This latter first postulated the existence of an urban man with qualitatively different neuro-cognitive attitudes from the country dwellers: “The psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the intensification of nervous stimulation which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli.” (Simmel 1903, 11). The two authors seem to spread, from the very beginning, a pessimistic view of the urban citizen represented as isolated, alienated, deprived of roots, easily influenced by “bulk” contagion.

If the point of view presented in those seminal works could be historically explained by the unexpected emergence of the mass society at the beginning of the twentieth century, over time it has been reified to become a well-rooted research tradition, both in sociological and psychological literature. With regard to the psychology, it has found a fertile ground in a discipline generally focused on the negative aspects of human behaviour, on the treatment of psychiatric pathologies and on the stressors able to influence cognition and personality. A classic example of this approach is the case of Kitty Genovese, one of the most famous studies in the history of social psychology (Latane and Darley 1969), in which the absence of empathy and the spread of personal responsibility (bystander effect) have been highlighted as characteristic features of the urban individual.

Another one is the “broken window” experiment designed by Zimbardo (1969), which describes some perceptual cues typical of urban areas (incivilities, poor maintenance) as triggers for antisocial behaviours. In Environmental Psychology, Milgram (1970) and other scholars focused on psychological overload and mental fatigue (Kuo 1992) as distinctive characteristics of the urban experience of the people. Following this idea, numerous studies dedicated to urban stressors have been realized, in which, in line with Simmel, the city is described as being the archetypical place for overcrowding and atmospheric, acoustic and light pollution (Glass and Singer 1972; Moser and Robin 2006). Furthermore, many recent authors noticed a causal relationship between urban environment and psychiatric disorders, mood disorders, anxiety and schizophrenia (Peen et al. 2010; Krabbendam and Van Os 2005).

Is it therefore mandatory to accept the idea that the city is, inherently, a pathological (and pathologizing) environment, and so urban psychology is a disease psychology? Some recent trends seem to indicate a different direction, able to offer fruitful answers on theoretical and applied grounds. From a general perspective, these trends seem to be characterized by some general changes that are deeply transforming the field. First of all, the mental illness definition is evolving from a general framework based on the health/disease antithesis to a continuum between flourishing and languishing which includes all people, not just those certified as pathological according to the psychiatric nosography (Keyes 2002; 2007; Inghilleri, Riva, and Riva 2014). Secondly, the conceptualization of men-environment relationships is switching from mechanistic and deterministic models to others that consider human beings as part of multifactor ecological systems, within which human behaviour is explained also through socio-cultural factors (Rainisio, Boffi, and Riva 2014). Moreover, a renewed interest in psychosocial issues by the design sciences could be noticed, which seem gradually increasing their awareness about the need to add to the aesthetic and functional dimensions a deeper comprehension about the inhabitants’ needs and practices (Boffi and Rainisio 2017). Looking forward, we can identify three developmental paths.

### **Wellbeing Cities**

The *wellbeing* concept is nowadays an integral part of public policies in many countries and municipalities. To give just one example, the British government launched in 2010 a National Wellbeing Programme aimed to “start measuring our progress as a country, not just by how our economy is growing, but by how our lives are improving”, and a large number of cities

(including Milan) has dedicated assessors to happiness and well-being or launched integrated programs to promote them. The cities around the world are getting ready, with the help of planners and social scientists, to taking into account the wellbeing of their inhabitants as a litmus test to (re)design themselves on a micro and macro scale. The most complete project realized so far regards the city of Santa Monica (The Wellbeing Project), an example of how research and data analysis, public authorities and active participation of the population can cooperate to generate urban change. This one is particularly interesting because it is based on the continuous collection of objective and subjective data, re-elaborated and geo-referenced to promote small-scale transformations. The data are in turn constantly communicated to the citizens, to activate a virtuous circle able to shape the behaviour of everyone.

Another interesting project in this direction is the 100 Resilient Cities, pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation (100RC). This project is dedicated to helping cities around the world become more resilient to the physical, social and economic challenges that are a growing part of the twenty-first century. 100RC supports the adoption and incorporation of a perspective of resilience that includes not only the shocks – earthquakes, fires, floods, etc. – but also the stresses that weaken the urban fabric on a day to day or cyclical basis.

## Urban Identities

Since the '90s, when urban marketing became “fashionable”, the cities have realized that they are also texts. To create well-being and a higher quality of life they should not focus only on their hard qualities (economy, infrastructure), but also on the soft ones, on the myriad of ways in which the city is constantly narrated, (re)defined and described by its inhabitants and users. This effect has grown exponentially with the spread of information and social networks, forming a hypertext that is complex to decipher and, at the same time rooted in the knowledge and behaviours of the citizens. As suggested by environmental psychology in fact, *place identities* and personal stories about our relationship with the cities help to structure the broader narrative of the individual Self and influence the quality of life perception and the daily action to conserve and improve our urban boundaries (Low and Altman 1992; Rainisio 2015). Therefore, understanding the emotional bond between inhabitants and the city means having valuable information to plan and better manage the urban space, also encouraging spontaneous activism. In this sector, new technologies are gaining importance, allowing us to map and simulate urban spaces in

an unprecedented way, redefining them in the light of data coming from the psycho-social context of everyday life.

### **Cities in common**

The pillar that holds the previous two together is self-reflexivity. The contemporary city continually thinks of itself as an integrated totality, within which the voice of the citizens must be constantly listened to implement the decision-making processes on small and large scales. Planning and putting in practice participative mechanisms that are both functional and truly representative of the needs of the population is one of the fundamental issue for social researchers nowadays (Boffi, Riva, and Rainisio, 2014). This is not a matter of consensus management, as often happens, but of spreading the responsibilities of government and care of urban space beyond the enclosure of expert knowledge and bureaucracies.

These traced paths allow us to highlight the salient adjectives for a new Urban Psychology:

1. *Positive*: Focused on place-related wellbeing and its psycho-social determinants;
2. *Applied*: Oriented to specific contexts and to the solution of local problems, adapting its methodologies (and tools) to the particularities of the places under investigation;
3. *Hybrid*: Open to a continuous dialogue with design sciences and the other social sciences;
4. *Technological*: Based on an extensive use of new technologies in data collection, analysis and representation (i.e. mapping, simulations, big data, etc.).

### **Experiencing Identities in the city**

Pivotal for such approach is the point of view offered by Positive Psychology, which is developing innovative contributions both in the theoretical and applied field. Consistently with the shift we highlighted so far, positive psychology authors began focusing less on malfunctioning and limitations at the individual and group level, to study more the constructive and progressive mechanisms of human beings (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). The notion of *wellbeing* gained a central role in this field of research, offering fruitful integrations to describe the interaction between man and the environment. In such perspective, the goal is not



only to define the maximization of an homeostatic condition of subjective wellbeing, which is related to the satisfaction of pleasure (e.g. needs like hunger, thirst, body comfort). It is fundamental also to describe a process through which persons build their own *wellbeing* growing and expressing their own full potential, moving beyond homeostasis to experience actual enjoyment (e.g. arts, sport, intellectually stimulating activities). Hence it becomes fundamental the capability to express individual's potential and personal predisposition to develop a comprehensive good relationship with an environment: whereas the aspects of pleasure are more easily comprehensible and translatable into physical features, enjoyment is a more elusive and complex notion to be taken into account for design purposes. In the attempt to define those dynamic aspects of psychological wellbeing including the different elements affecting it, Ryff (1989; Ryff and Keyes 1995) describes a model including six different factors of wellbeing: positive evaluations of one's qualities and goals accomplished in the past (Self-Acceptance), capability of continually develop as individual while expressing one's potential (Personal Growth), feeling that everyday actions have a higher meaning and are consistent with a general direction in life (Purpose in Life), a sense of self-determining one's choice notwithstanding general social norms (Autonomy), having meaningful and interpersonal relations with others (Positive Relations With Others), the ability to select or create environments suitable to the characteristics of someone (Environmental Mastery). For the purpose of our chapter, such categorization is useful as it highlights the interaction among three main domains influencing *wellbeing*, namely the individual level, the social community one is part of, and the environment (also physical) where one lives. These three pillars can be discussed more in detail referring to specific theoretical concepts.

At the individual level, it is particularly relevant the psychological construct of "flow of consciousness or optimal experience", originally developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1975) and in the following forty years further studied in relation to a vast array of cultural contexts, social frameworks and individual characteristics. It is described as a state of deep engagement, gratification and positive affect experienced by people when carrying out activities meaningful for themselves. When such activity is done successfully and in a spontaneous way, the individuals feel that their actions "flow" without being aware of the effort as the concentration is totally focused on the task itself. In this situation the interface among cognitive, affective and motivational processes gives origin to a unique positive sensation which is seen as intrinsically rewarding, hence the individual is motivated to repeat it over time. A great variety of activities

can be linked to such experience, depending on variables including cultural context and individual characteristics (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; 1997; Inghilleri, 1999). Such theory suggests a complex interaction with the environment, whose effects on wellbeing are not only defined by intrinsic environmental features (Rainisio, Boffi, and Riva, 2014). The quality of our relationship with the environment is then strictly defined by the actions we are able, or not able, to perform in it. An environment capable of offering opportunities for multiple uses, open to habits not yet conceived, will be at last more prone to favor a creative and psychologically optimal use of it.

The relationship of the individual with the community is traditionally considered a relevant issue in social psychology, due to the positive effects that community engagement can have on individuals. Indeed, participating in activities oriented to the public interest with other people sharing common goals can transform the personal identity, leading to opportunities of self-realization (Gamson 1992). It has been demonstrated in different populations that being active in one's community can increase self-efficacy (Prilleltensky, Nelson, and Peirson 2001; Smetana, Campione-Barr, and Metzger 2006), therefore positively influencing wellbeing. This aspect has become progressively more important over the years, considering the increasing importance of new forms of participation. In this perspective, for example, the wide list of behaviors included in the notion of civic engagement can be referred to activities ranging from those strictly political to the ones more generically civic, being them nowadays performed both online and offline (Jugert et al. 2013). Data show that, among the main variables with a positive relationship with community engagement, sense of community has a major role (Talò 2017). *Sense of community* (Sarason 1974; McMillan and Chavis 1986) refers to the feeling of belonging to a group, which exerts mutual influence for the individual and the community, offering the opportunity to satisfy needs and share positive interactions. Environments promoting such perception in a community would result a key factor in fostering engagement and wellbeing at a collective level.

The third pillar relevant for our analysis is more strictly connected to environmental features. An effective concept used to define these aspects is *place identity*, which allows us to describe how physical and symbolic elements of specific places contribute to build individual identity (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983). Such relation explains why urban environments, landscapes and architectural elements are so important from an affective and symbolic point of view. Part of our personal identity is dependent on our perception of physical aspects of the

environment, including memories, emotions and experiences we linked to a certain type of place. The places where we spend the majority of our time in our daily routines or where we lived for a long period have a bigger influence on the self of individuals, as place identity results from physical elements and social relations (Fried, 2000). This perspective proves useful also to explain reactions of local communities to *local unwanted land uses*, the concept largely known through mass media as NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) effect (Devine-Wright 2009). Taking into account such complex relationship between places and identity, physical interventions on the environment have an effect also on the identity of individuals. It is then fundamental to define if the material and economic needs of a design project are consistent or incompatible with the relational and symbolic ones. The successful accomplishment of an intervention is strictly connected with this kind of evaluation, because higher levels of place attachment and identification with the place are conducive to more place-protective behaviours.

### **Tools for assessment**

According to the proposed approach, an interdisciplinary evaluation of environment is the only way to effectively define physical and social elements which are interrelated in defining urban spaces. If social sciences in general offer many instruments to complement the point of view of urban planning, many of the constructs formerly discussed rely on the assumption of directly measuring the subjective perception of persons involved in the investigation and have been mainly developed in psychological literature. In this field, many different methodologies have been developed, according to the different goals and theories guiding the research. Validated scales are a widespread instrument, allowing to precisely assess and quantify a specific construct. They represent a fundamental tool to describe well-defined concepts existing in literature, but cannot be altered in their structure to allow comparisons with previous existing data. Questionnaires are a more flexible resource, which can be adapted to specific research needs even if less powerful in terms of comparison with other case studies. If the interest of someone is more on qualitative aspects, interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic methodologies can be fruitfully applied to collect rich and exploratory descriptions of the investigated phenomenon. A mixed approach, combining two or more of these methodologies, is traditionally considered the most effective way to depict the general framework when studying a specific case. This would also allow to better adapt the instruments to specific case studies, selecting those that are considered as more relevant for the specific populations or the type of places at stake.



## Conclusion

The city is a perfect example of psychic cultural artefact: it is maintained over time, survives and spreads if it is related to the psychic energy, the cognitive, affective, motivational processes and subsequent actions of individuals. The mind of the inhabitants is not only in their bodies, but *it is also in the city* which becomes a fundamental deposit of emotions and cognitive instructions for the behaviours. The cities, as every kind of artefacts, are not produced and maintained by themselves. They are originated from the application of psychic processes of individuals: we actively use a part of the city (a building, a square, an institution) to achieve personal and social goals. This process happens only if the relationship with an urban element allows a good experience, both from a cognitive and emotional point of view. All the material and immaterial elements of human cultures (cities and their symbolic aspects included) are loved, maintained, transmitted over the time if they can produce positive and meaningful subjective experiences in the people. These deep psychological functions of the cities show the responsibility of the architects and the urban planners in becoming builders of meaning and positive experiences.

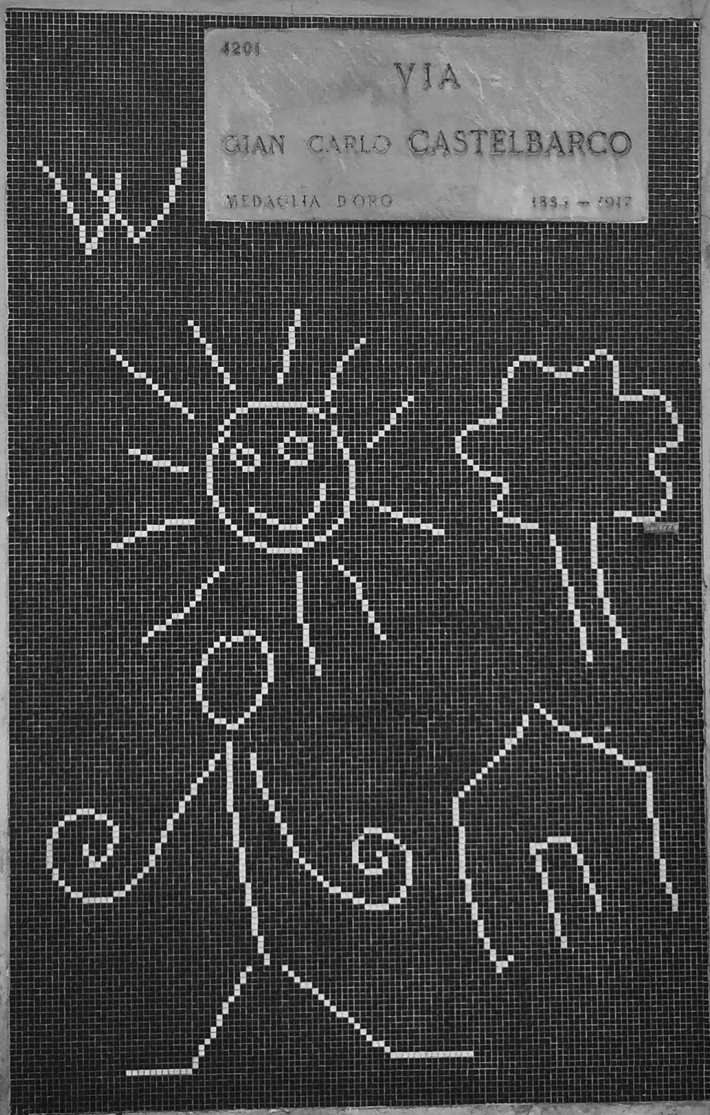
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VIA

GIAN CARLO CASTELBARCO

MEDAGLIA D'ORO

1954 - 2017





## Human Interpretations of Space

Madalina Ghibusi

This chapter focuses on the several implications between people and space. Nevertheless, the relationship between these two entities, good, bad, strong or merely existent, is a simple acknowledgement that architecture lives, and it is as dynamic, complex and fragile as the human nature. This short analogy between the architectural object and human, introduces the identity meaning of this inquiry that is regarded as a tool to understand the participants of the dialogue. The dialogue in this context is intended as one of the ways of knowledge exploring (Zingale 2009, 64), as architects trying to understand not only to ask. Then, the participants in this dialogue are, on one hand, the space and the individual, and, on the other hand, the several disciplines that deal with these two. From the architectural point of view, the means of understanding the human needs, require access to deeper insights into psychology of the individual and the masses, trying to relate to socio-cultural tools connected to the space conditions. In this sense we need to calibrate the implications that sociological approaches have in the field of architecture, also through approaches and terminology that are supported by the fields of human geography and environmental psychology. The discourse will highlight how, for example, *place*, *genius loci*, *identity*, *place attachment* are common terms studied cross-disciplinary. The touching points between the sciences that deal with the terms of city and people can be reached through a deeper insight in connecting concepts and terms, trying to apply a soft, practical and conceptual approach on a hard science in the *osmotic* continuous relationship between these (Cervelli and Sedda 2005, 185). This relationship is going to be reargued

as one that can be described by empathy. Then it is important to mention the different approaches on the term of *place* in the search of the human dimension of architecture and to understand not only how it is perceived and experienced but also what kind of behaviour this interaction can build into individuals.

So the discourse of this human interpretations of space does not regard social architecture, in the sense of the architectural space that is able to meet the needs of social challenged users, but more an insight from the sciences centered on the human nature and its implications on the architectural space as a proposal to open new ways of thinking about the space we design. In this case, the speech of identity focuses on the reflections of the human experience of the space and the relationships created due to this condition, whether active or passive, whether the human is participant or consumer, physically present or not. This position can overcome the fragile relation between contemporary space and other human centered sciences, if it is regarded as a potential to engage the individual into giving the space emotional valences. A strong structure of the space cannot be modified by the human diversity and uncertainty and it should because it seems that this social evaluation can ensure a quality of the place throughout time.

Leaving space for interpretations can emerge into a power of engagement between the storyteller and its listener or between space planner and client. But city planners write the story of the city with their own language while common people do not have access to the same tools to express their vision and perception of the city they live in or they want to live in. They express themselves through their actions or the human language. How do we translate these words into architecture? Taken the statement that “the cities are the last hope of a collective action truly efficient” (Bauman 2014, 42) as a hypothesis, how do we define this action? A collective action implies that a diversity of human nature proceeds in a unique act and participates for consuming the objective of their action. Is it possible that the nature of the man as a consumer can be the trigger and the bonding element for a collective act? This inquiry is necessary in order to practice the dialogue between space and its users, to establish a common language as the means of communication even if this proves to be, the space itself.



## An empathetic relationship

Recognizing itself into a building throughout the social relationships that one practices every day is an evaluation of identity in the reciprocal way depicted by Christian Norberg-Schulz, where the user of a space “has to identify himself with the environment, that is, he has to know how he is a certain place.” (Norberg-Schulz 1980, 19). This way of developing an affective connection between two entities without knowing each other is a form of empathy. Bill Hillier and Julianne Hanson state that architecture itself can be a social art, giving the space the power to generate the relations between the function of it and its social meaning by identifying the same order between buildings and people relationships: “Architecture is not a social art simply because buildings are important visual symbols of society, but also because, through the ways in which buildings, individually and collectively, create and order space, we are able to recognize society: that it exists and has a certain form” (Hillier and Hanson 1984, 2). If we interpret the relations between different types of spaces, grouped into small communities by the same type of preference in lighting, we can say that architecture performs on a system of human interaction. The way different rooms open to each other through transparency or isolate through thick insulated walls talks about communication. The hierarchy between the areas that host the main function and the rooms that support it can be developed on the structure of the working society: the fewer representative ones cannot thrive without the background support of the numerous annexes. This interpretation is not new, as also Henry Lefebvre demonstrates how “In spatial practice, the reproduction of social relations is predominant.” (Lefebvre 1974, 50). And what is relevant for the discourse of affective relations between space and social interpretations is that recognizing this relations inside a building can help people orientate within it or approach it in a more familiar way: “Without reducing the importance of orientation, we have to stress that dwelling above all presupposes identification with the environment. (...) one gets along without feeling *at home*. And it is possible to fell at home without being well acquainted with the spatial structure of the place” (Norberg-Schulz 1980, 20). Getting to know a place so well that you can use it without being aware of it, is the way architecture “mimes” the human behavior in order to make itself acceptable and to self-sustain a permanence in time.

So, the representation of the social interaction within the object, the building or the space, creates empathetic connections because the person approaches and identifies himself with the place. All this happens to the persons without being conscious of what makes them experience it this way as they cannot identify in the same language of the designer the rules of the architectural space that is intended to express social networks of relationships: “The social purpose of a building may thus be the expression of a status, a role, a group, a collectivity, or institution; and a collection of buildings may represent the social system as a whole.” (Norberg-Schulz 1980, 118). Therefore, this form of empathetic interaction between architecture and the manifestation of its perceptions, can be seen as one of the social dimensions of it.

Secondly, the empathy could synthesize the relationship between the field of architecture and human sciences, as it is concluded by Chris Label after an inquiry of the development of the design thinking: “The architect empathizes with the people and the place in which they live in order to give form to that identity. The human scientist empathizes with his subjects in order to understand, describe and explain that identity” (Label 1997, 34). Another manifestation of this empathy that formulates the importance of a reciprocity between space and its user, was, the essentializing quote of Winston Churchill: “We shape or buildings, and afterwards, the buildings shape us”.<sup>1</sup> This speech, held in the House of Commons after a serious war bombing, was, according to Marino Bonaiuto, Elena Bilotta and Ferdinando Fornara, a first shift from the functional necessities that an architecture must guarantee towards one in which there are recognizable aspects resulted from the “relationship between persons and the physical-spatial assessment” such as “affective, communicative and symbolical” aspects (Bonaiuto et al. 2014, 9).<sup>2</sup> Throughout the book the discourse continues on the development of this “architectural psychology” (ibid.) that also defines some guidelines for the phases of the design process: starting from an analysis and understanding of the users, throughout the design and construction phase and then the part of evaluating the product based on its use. This thread of the design actions can illustrate the first definition of the empathy as “the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the

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1 – Quote from “Churchill and the Chamber of Commons”.  
<http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/building/palace/architecture/palacestructure/churchill/>.

2 – Translation of the author.

feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner”.<sup>3</sup>

It can also be identified in the work of the anthropologist Edward T. Hall the same empathetic connection between architectural form and its receiver through experience. He offers a framework for the discussion of experiencing the space by developing his concept of proxemics (Hall 1966, 1), studying the relationships between human and the way he uses the space: “virtually everything that man is and does is associated with the experience of space” (Hall 1966, 180). To picture this action and reaction between built space and its user, he describes the work of Frank Lloyd Wright in the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo and the way the building “provides the Westerner with a constant visual, kinesthetic, and tactile reminder that he is in a different world. The changing levels, the circular, walled-in, intimate stairs to the upper floors, and the small scale are all new experiences. The long halls are brought to scale by keeping the walls within reach” (Hall 1966, 51). From this point of view, a critical discourse on how the architecture is being experienced is more recently laid out from an architectural perspective, by Henry Plummer, through a classification of relationships between the architectural form and the behaviour it generates with people and with its setting (Plummer 2016).

These interpretations of the connections between these interlaying fields of sciences (architecture, psychology, sociology, anthropology) is supporting reciprocal empathy between each other but also between the sciences and its subjects. All this is in the pursuit of an understanding and a proactive use of the specific differences and the common characteristics found in these subjects.

### Confronting attitudes towards the Place

The Oxford Dictionary of Architecture defines the term of place throughout the notion of *genius loci*.<sup>4</sup> Introducing this concept it is necessary to be mentioned the interpretations of place conducted by Christian Norberg-

3 – Definition from the Merriam-Webster online dictionary: [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com). (November 2017)

4 – As found in the dictionary, the definition for the notion “place” is “see *genius loci*”. The definition of *genius loci*, in the same dictionary, is “Latin term meaning the ‘genius of the place’, referring to the presiding deity or spirit. Every place has its own unique qualities, not only in terms of its physical makeup, but of how it is perceived, so it ought to be (but far too often is not) the responsibilities of the architect or landscape designer to be sensitive to those unique qualities, to enhance them rather than to destroy them.” Oxford Dictionary of Architecture Third Edition. 2015. Oxford U.P.

Schulz (1980) throughout his approach on the notion of *genius loci*. The author, in his well known publication *Genius Loci: Towards A Phenomenology Of Architecture*, investigates the architectural purpose as place making throughout the psychological and symbolical implications of different forms of architecture. Before Norberg-Schulz, beginning from the 1970s, geographers like Yi-Fu Tuan, Anne Buttimer and Edward Relph engaged into a more broad inquiry of the notion of place relating it to the human experience (Seamon and Sowers 2008, 43). Firstly, Yi-Fu Tuan develops the concept of *topophilia*<sup>5</sup> as “the affective bond between people and place” (Tuan 1974, 4). In his later studies he redefines the notions of space and place related to their experience throughout a comparative study and so he defines place through familiarity, enclosure, pause and static movement. In addition, for a space to become a place it needs to be known and thus processed through the identification of one’s with it, “place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other” (Tuan 1977, 3). The same perspective is also debated by Relph through his concept of *insideness* of a place, arguing that the more a person feels protected inside a place, the stronger is his identification with it, and thus the places become “fusions of human significant centers of our immediate experiences of the world (...) They are important sources of individual and communal identity” (Relph 1976, 141).

In urban contexts, Anne Buttimer, in 1972, starts questioning the definition of place studying the experience of it and the behaviour of different groups and communities in residential areas (Buttimer and Seamon 1980, 189). She proposes a measure of the *sense of place* as a “function of how well it provides a center for one’s life” (Buttimer and Seamon 1980, 171). More recent studies of this *sense of place* argue that “it is the people – individuals and society – that integrate these features, through their value systems, to form a sense of place” (Jiven and Larkham 2003, 78). This is also the case of the strategy that the architect Joze Plecnik applied in the city of Ljubljana, where, in his designs he intentionally left some free space for people’s own interpretations of what is built because this “requires users’ capacities for making sense of places to be brought into play at the conscious level: one knows that one has oneself made the meanings of such places, because one knows that the

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5 – The text refers to the meaning of the term in the field of human geography popularized by Yi-Fu Tuan in 1978 although previously the notion has been first introduced in 1948 by the English-American poet Wystan Hugh Auden referring to a love of places in the poetry of John Betjeman. Later, in 1958, the concept was developed by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard through a phenomenological approach on architecture in his work “La Poétique de l’Espace” where he introduces the book with the term of *topophilia* as being the investigation of poetic images of the loved places “espaces aimés” (Bachelard 1958, 17).

meaning could have been otherwise” (Butina-Watson and Bentley 2007, 68). So, the *sense of place* should be triggered through the own experience of it in a *place making* process, targeting in the same time both the individual and the community he is part of, to arrive to more stable and representative identities in time. Joze Plecnik, in his design of the river banks in Ljubljana triggered an on-going demonstration of the multitude and diversity of uses and interpretations of these longitudinal and inclined areas by both designers and people. It has become a memorable part of the urban character and identity that is still exploited nowadays in formal and informal ways, in urban design interventions and in the ways citizens experience the edge between the water flow and the city, giving it personal values. In this way the river banks function as a stretched center of the life of citizens, providing and enriching a sense of place, over time, while reinforcing the visual, cultural and social identity of this capital. This identification is enabled on micro and macro level by this architectural strategy and is contributing to the reinforcement of the community both through the representative value and through the practical use of these public spaces by the individuals. In the contemporary urbanity,



Charles Bohl, in the pursuit of the *place making* strategies, emphasizes how the development of a community is based on a strong identification of the area that is not only easily recognisable but also has the potential to “put communities on the map” (Bohl 2002, 46).

As a community is linked throughout the social relationship these, again, can be seen as “the means by which the link toward the place is imbued with affectivity” (Rollero and De Piccoli 2010, 6). Therefore, if a place is able to generate a human reaction towards or within it, it receives also a psychological potential, not only cognitive but also on the affective level. This affective level is questioned throughout the concept of *place attachment*. Although it is generally accepted the importance of the *place attachment* in the past decade for social sciences researchers, in the contemporary era, the challenge is exactly the fluidity of it and the difficulty of reconciling it with the need for close emotional ties to specific places (Lewicka 2011, 226). Assuming this affective level of the spatial experience, Anne Buttner approaches it by “investigating patterns of identifications with the territory” (Buttner and Seamon 1980, 25). We can see how in defining the spatial experience process, the concepts of place attachment and place identification intersect. Searching for a clear definition of the concept of place attachment there is still a great ambiguity of theoretical support. Therefore, place attachment can be pictured as “an umbrella concept embracing the multiplicity of positive affects that have places as targets” (Giuliani 2003, 150).

For a more clear overview upon this ambiguity of the concept, the investigation on the notion can be done, as proposed by Leila Scannel and Robert Gifford (2010) by structuring all the existing theories on three dimensions that are: place as the object of attachment, person as the actor and process as the psychological interactions. Following this multi-dimensional framework, the *place attachment* is defined as being “a bond between an individual or group and a place that can vary in terms of spatial level, degree of specificity, and social or physical features of the place, and is manifested through affective, cognitive, and behavioral psychological processes.” (Scannel and Gifford 2010, 5). But although this formulation of the concept is intended to offer a narrower and clearer image of the *place attachment*, Rollero and de Piccoli observe that the overlapping of cognitive and affective dimensions in the study of *place attachment* and place identity is what makes them difficult to be measured in specific cases. So in order to measure these in a research on a group of residents of the Italian city Turin they proposed a segregation of these two aspects

without denying their copresence in the spatial experience process that can have in the same time two dimensions: “an affective dimension, that is the emotional bond toward places (place attachment), and a cognitive dimension, related to the cognitions about the self as a member of a physical space (place identification)” (Rollero and de Piccoli 2010, 2). The research<sup>6</sup> conducted on a group of 328 persons confirmed both the link and the differences between the concepts as founded on their hypothetical segregation. For example the level of education predicts both the attachment and identification but in different ways, while the length of residence influences directly only the identification and social relationships are a direct predictor of place attachment (Rollero and de Piccoli 2010, 6). Spatial interpretations of results of these kind of applied research can calibrate the design process according to the resources of the inhabitants and the inhabited space towards a sense of place, as a calibrating function of it. But for creating this *sense of place*, the environment should nourish the bonds between the person and the place whether they are enabled on cognitive or emotional level.

In the context of the approach coconducted by Rollero and De Piccoli we can relate the case study of Nevicata14<sup>7</sup> from the place attachment point of view supporting on one hand that “being active in a physical environment leads to the development of a higher place attachment” (ibid.) and on the other hand that “the affective link does not require long time to develop” (ibid.). In 2015, in Milan, the space of the temporary project called Nevicata14 was conceived by the studio Guidarini & Salvadeo and Snark as a sea of white islands evoking a rare and simple pleasure that people can have in an urban Milan: the one of the snow and its possible meanings for the urban living. The project was promoted as an invitation starting by asking the question “what will be here?”, and offered the image of a sort of white canvas on which everyone can be free to dream and suggest his needs and wishes for the Piazza Castello in Milan. Such an approach

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6 – Chiara Rollero and Norma De Piccoli carried out a research in Turin, Italy, on a sample of 328 inhabitants randomly chosen from a total of 30 apartment buildings from all the city's districts. The research aimed to grasp the differences between the affective and cognitive connections with the places, and the correlated predictors of both place attachment and place identity (Rollero and De Piccoli 2010, 3-4).

7 – The project was developed like a collective action of rethinking and redesigning future strategies for the urban space of the Piazza Castello, initiated by the Milan City's Hall and the Triennale Museum. The process took place in 2015 in the context of the international event EXPO15 and it was designed by the studios Guidarini&Salvadeo + Snark. More details about the project can be found at: <http://nevicata14.tumblr.com/> (November 2017).



activated engaging behaviours between all the actors and even role-playing in the sense that people co-designed temporarily the space. This was triggered into the inhabitants, tourists and passers-by through the joy of experiencing their own interpretations of the identity of that specific urban square. In this case the fragility of unpermanence is also creating *place attachment*, thus the dynamic background of the contemporary space is not conditioning the development of strong relationships with the place. It is also interesting to see how affective relations between people and places is not necessarily conditioned by the duration and organisation of it, but more by the feeling of control over it, of making the place the own emotional property of someone. Therefore, this experience illustrates how also informal and temporary scenerios can evoke the *place attachment*.

## Conclusion

Environmental psychology that focuses on *place attachment*, *place identity* and *sense of place*, showed how that “the processes of collective action work better when emotional ties to places and their inhabitants are cultivated” (Manzo and Perkins 2006, 347). But the challenge is to cultivate this emotional tie between architecture and its user, because accordingly to Edward Relph, places “are not abstractions or concepts, but are directly experienced phenomena of the lived-world (...) and are often profound centres of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties” (Relph 1976, 141). After we have introduced the experience as being the mechanism of enabling emotional and psychological connections, future inquiries can regard the transition from user to consumer of space to better grasp the possible emotional ties as consuming implies more implication than simply using. This consumeristic approach is a constructive transformation although often the consumer is the one that engages into a action mainly motivated by its personal gain. Jean Baudrillard relates the relationship between the consumer and the objects to a system where the first finds himself and so he becomes the designer (Baudrillard 1968, 26). In a contemporary digital era, Carlo Ratti shows how citizens, by consuming the space, change the future upcoming (Ratti 2014, 85). These points of view, in different ways, suggest that the act of consuming defines an identity. The way we choose to consume the space reveals the commons and the specifics of our human nature in a specific context.

Relating to a place, the act of consuming does not necessarily have a destructive dimension but a constructive one, giving it new interpretations,



as usually a place does not end after using it. The physical construction might need restoring in time, but the place identity grows in time through different acts of this type of consumption. In a way, it could be said that the citizens participate more in the collective act for the city if they truly consume it, as consuming relates more to the inner individual than the simple act of participation. A consumer is usually engaging into a certain activity mostly for supplying a need or desire, in other words for personal gain. This particular intention is what transforms the user of space into a consumer of space in the first place. By relating to the consumer of space and the act of consuming instead of user of space and the act of using we can arrive to deeper meanings of architecture, in an active way rather than a passive one. Therefore, the consumer not only takes something for his personal challenges from the space, but it also questions further what the space has to offer for the specific interest of every individual. From this point of view, the discourse can shift its focus on the relationship of consuming as being the scale of measuring the value of interaction. So, it can be further questioned that, the space of the city needs a sort of transformative consumption through the specific needs and desires of the people in order to be evaluated at its fully potential, in the sense in which Jean Baudrillard states that “consummated and consumed is never the object but the relationship itself” (Baudrillard 1968, 201). The same view of a constructive consumption but this time in urban areas, is also assumed by Henry Lefebvre talking about the space that “appears as a product of singular character, in that it is sometimes simply consumed (in such forms as travel, tourism, or leisure activities) as a vast commodity, and sometimes, in metropolitan areas, productively consumed (just as machines are, for example), as a productive apparatus of grand scale” (Lefebvre 1974, 349).

A productive consummation can be perpetrated through the relationship between the city's form and the behaviour it generates, and consequently, on emotional level, the engagement it enables. To sum up, throughout the discourse of this chapter it was highlighted the importance of a dialogue based on empathy between architecture and other disciplines in order to constructively understand the way in which, through the place, it is developed the bond between architectural intention and the human experience. This can open a new road of further investigation debating if and how this bond can work both ways by giving it a consumeristic value.

# LOST IDENTITY



a city without the child's particular movement is a paradox. the child discovers its identity against all odds, damaged and damaging, in perpetual danger and incidental sunshine.

example: the child and the city



snow! the child takes over. yet what it needs is

hand in hand  
with whatever  
represents  
imagination  
unhushed  
the child  
survives  
edged towards  
the fringes  
of our attention,  
an emotional  
and  
"unproductive"  
quantum.



something far more permanent than snow.

## Game as Co-Design Tool

Madalina Ghibusi

Probably one of the clearest examples on the connection between play, architecture and identity resides from the dissolution of the most important platform for architecture and urbanism after World War II, the *Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne* (CIAM). At the 9th edition of CIAM, in 1953 in Air-en-Provence, the first signs of criticism against functionalism were promoted by the architects Peter and Alison Smithson when they presented their concept of *urban re-identification*. On their panels, they used pictures with children to exemplify their critique of the rational city and to propose possible solutions that were inspired by the intuitive play of the children on different scales from the house to the street, and from district to the city itself. Their argument was towards a social cohesion within the urban environment that they sustained it was possible to be identified in the activity of playing. Later on, in the following edition of CIAM in 1956, *Lost Identity* was the title of the panel stating the problem of the city, presented by Aldo van Eyck, marking further the beginning of the end of the functionalism promoted by the modern movement in the postwar decades. The panel illustrated once again the problem through the image of the children in the city, stating that “a city without the child’s particular movement is a paradox. The child discovers its identity against all odds, damaged and damaging, in perpetual danger and incidental sunshine” (McCarter 2015, 78). With the example of the playgrounds van Eyck started his manifest against functionalism preaching towards a creative, social connective and human centered design that, in his opinion, was completely disregarded by the functionalist trend.

Although briefly mentioned, it is clear how these two manifestations appealed to the ludic dimension as a way of rediscovering the identity of the city and this was to be marking the beginning of structuralism in architecture and consequently the end of functionalism, two of the main international tendencies in international architecture and urbanism. Although there were other critiques of the functionalist city inside the CIAM movement before the ones of TEAM 10 (Kozlovsky 2013, 220), apparently their interpretation of the urban problems introducing the perspective of the child is what enhanced the critique leading it to a crucial role in the history of architecture. So, this example of how a child perceives the places of the city and thus his role for the city itself, marking the beginning of a new way of thinking in architecture based on the participation of the people, can only underline the power of our inner ludic dimension and the strong influence it has on planning and design.

### ***Ludus: Engaging the man***

For the deeper understanding of this ludical dimension that has the potential to emerge in future strategies for designing the city, it is important to put in balance some relevant studies regarding the concept of playing. Starting from the premises of the act of play and the way it relates to the human nature, we will see that this form of interaction can exceed its first apparent objective that is the one of simple enjoyment.

Throughout the evolution of the individual, the play was multi-educational, was the way to learn and practice social relationships, was the micro universe where the expression of identity was free right from the early discovering of it. Moreover, according to the pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, the act of playing marks the very beginning of the cultural experience of an individual as this can be perpetrated through a “creative living first manifested through play” (Winnicott 1971, 135). But Johan Huizinga supported that the true meaning of the act of playing for culture exceeds its sense for the development of a child. He promotes the idea that play has a “social function” and this is how it becomes a “cultural factor” for the humankind (Huizinga 1938, 4). This is how the historian starts, in 1938, to introduce *homo ludens* or *man the player* by investigating the cultural aspect of the act of play. In his investigation Huizinga supports the idea that playing contributes to the creation of culture through a conjugation of its meaning in several areas that relate to the social manifestations of it like the war, politics, justice, linguistics, art, philosophy, poetry and ritual, all this forming the image of the cultural phenomenon of playing. This is the context of his debate in which he

formulates the five main characteristics of play: the freedom of it, not being “ordinary”, its distinction from ordinary life through locality and duration, that it is and creates order and that “no material interest” can be gained from it (Huizinga 1938, 7-13). These attributes describe the pure nature of practicing play that, as he argues, precedes the human civilization but in the same time it contributes to the formation of civilization as we know it and thus it becomes a “civilizing function” (Huizinga 1938, 46). This function is mostly identifiable in the collective actions of “social play” (Huizinga 1938, 47).

The sociology of play is later on discussed by Roger Caillois in 1958 that restructured the classification of play while criticizing the characteristics of Huizinga as being helpful but limited. This is how he reformulates and offers further arguments of the previous classification and consequently arrives to six core characteristics of this activity that are, in his vision, “free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, regulated and fictive” (Caillois 1958, 43). But what is significantly added to the study of Huizinga is a classification of play forms in *agon* (competition), *alea* (chance), *mimicry* (simulation) and *ilinx* (vertigo) (Caillois 1958, 40). This classification is of relevance in the search of understanding the great complexity of the act of playing as he proposes a study of its structure and relations through different combinations of these play attitudes (Caillois 1958, 71). This structure can and should also be dynamically calibrated between two extremes: *paidia* and *ludus*, that define the grade of improvisation and joy or, respectively, regulation and difficulty inside the game (Caillois 1958, 27). So overall Caillois proposes a system of studying the relations between the different forms of playing as a framework of understanding the social behavior based on this activity.

Secondly, Caillois inquires the social consequences of play as a continuation of the study of Huizinga on the culture derived from play (Caillois 1958, 58). This is how he starts “laying the foundations for a sociology derived from games” as he identifies that “the fact that the behavior that is so exalting develops in a separate, ideal world, sheltered from any fatal consequence, explains in my view the cultural fertility of games and makes it understandable how the choice to which they attest itself reveals the character, pattern, and values of every society” (Caillois 1958, 66).

Therefore, it is the way of playing the game that is more significant into searching the identity of a social group rather than the game itself and this assumption is relevant when there is the intention to use the game as a method of cross-disciplinary study. What is also interesting is these theories, is that, although it is questioned the power of engagement that

is perpetrated by play, the paradox is that the players do not employ in a game motivated by a predefined goal: “In a general way, play is like education of the body, character, or mind, without the goal’s being predetermined” (Caillois 1958, 167). Relating to this goal, the behavior of play can also be analyzed as a type of “expressive behavior” in the way it is depicted by Abraham Maslow in his *Theory of Motivation* (1954) that is as being different from the coping behavior which is based on goal seeking. Maslow furtherly states that this expressive behavior is “simply a reflection of the personality” (Maslow 1954, 29).

The Superkilen<sup>1</sup> project in Copenhagen can be seen as an intention to reflect the identity of different culture in a public space that is polyvalent and although phisical playgrounds can be found in this place, the play is more emphasized through the atmosphere. If the designers have seen this space like a large universal garden, it seems to me that it can also be interpreted as a large playground of 57 cultures who meet in this place intrigued and motivated by discovery. The public space, that visually gives the impression of a large and entangled jigsaw puzzle makes the individuals of different cultural identities wonder about other spaces and objects that reflect the other cultures, question why and then experience them. This is how the space becomes a way of understanding other people through the play of colors, surfaces, materials, heights, activities, things that are not from their world. In the same time, it encourages every individual to find themselves in this space, to find that object from their country, and then to observe how others find it, use it and if and how they embrace it, like a sort of test of acceptance. The behavior in this space also seems like a matrix game that, when it inserts the cultural dimension, opens the possibility to further expand the result of different uses of the same space. It is a way of finding your own identity and in the same time understanding the identity of another one: it achieves its goal of socio-cultural inclusion through a play of identities. The project is also a sort of co-design process, as the users of this park were not only punctually involved in the physical construction of small areas but most importantly each one was represented in the design of the urban space, celebrating identity in diversity through a spatial manifesto.

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1 – Superkilen is a project in Nørrebro, Copenhagen designed by a trio of architecture, landscape and art teams: BIG Architects, Topotek 1 and Superflex in 2012. The area of the project is placed in one of the most culturally overloaded neighborhood in Copenhagen and so this become the conceptual trigger of the project that incorporated symbols of each culture in the urban design from objects to materials, topography, activities and practices.





the way one acts inside the environment that the play conditions create. It seems that the pursue of attracting others into the action of playing is not based on the declared goal of it but more on stimulating the pleasures and the needs identified in the players through the use of the game as the method of identifying them, more specifically through the way they play it. From this hypothesis it can be developed a method of study leaving from the classification of the forms of play identified by Caillois and their touching points with the human behavior stretching more on the needs and pleasures in order to trigger engagement.

### **To play as to co-design**

The needs, the pleasures and how the human nature is accessing them throughout its ludic component can be a premise for defining a space strategy if we consider the statement of Henry Lefebvre: “In space needs and desires can reappear as such, informing both the act of producing and its products.” (Lefebvre 1974, 348). The producers, the act of producing and its products (in this case the space) can be approached like an interconnected system throughout the concept of co-design. The aspect of the co-design as concept and method that is relevant in the connection with the play is the continuous engagement interpreted as the key to produce social innovation. To understand better the connection between these two in the process of co-design, Garth Britton (2017) investigates how the continuity of the co-design process transforms it into an inquiry about the participants developing its initial use as a method for a certain objective. This assumption is also inquired by Henry Lefebvre in his work *La production de l'espace* (1974) and it concludes stating that “space can no longer be looked upon as an *essence*, as an object distinct from the point of view of (or as compared with) *subjects*, as answering to a logic of its own” (Lefebvre 1974, 411). Similarly, in the theory of *architectural psychology*, there is a special focus on the importance of “co-involving the users” (Bonaiuto et al. 2014, 27). Interpreting together these three different points of view from the field of political science, philosophy and psychology, we can see that they all imply the participative quality that a space must supply.

This is where the act of playing is becoming relevant as a framework generating continuous interest. This type of participation that can be perpetrated through the act of play is studied also through the concept of *gamification*. This term has been used after the years 2000 and the general accepted description of it in the specialized fields of study is focusing around using the elements and structure of games in other contexts (Kopeć



and Pacewicz 2015, 27). In the same time, the definition as found in the dictionary describes the concept as a process of adding games or game like elements to something so as to encourage participation.<sup>2</sup> Although intended to encourage participation but not in the same manner as promoted by *gamification*, the temporary urban space created through the event project Nevicata14<sup>3</sup> in Piazza Castello in Milan was also inspired by Aldo van Eyck manifest to rediscover identity throughout the dimension of the child perception. This intuition of recreating the space as the white canvas arrived to a co-design practice and to a participative behavior: old people, inhabitants, journalists, passers-by were subconsciously attracted to participate in the creation of the future scenarios. The reason for this behavior can be reasoned by the space being empowered in the same way van Eyck implies that a child becomes the man of the city when the snow covers it. This way of interaction between the child and the space functions, according to van Eyck as a way of reconstructing the identity of the city, the human dimension as not only the child discovers its possibilities through the white canvas but also “the city discovers the child” (McCarter 2015, 51). The project of Nevicata14 was clearly a practice of co-design with its users but it did not use intentionally the game as a tool for this practice although it appealed to the ludic stimulation in the way it was seen by Aldo van Eyck.

The second condition that the project ensured was the one of the scenario, which, according to Eva Brandt, “It is clear that situated enactment of scenarios is useful not only for validating design ideas, but also to explore new possibilities” (Brandt and Messeter 2004, 122). On this scenario-based framework she develops the study of design games for encouraging participation and collaboration. So, in order to relate to an applied example of the game as a co-design tool it is relevant an insight into the studies conducted by Eva Brandt as part of a research specialized on this subject. These studies are significant into understanding the potential of this tool also because the argument for these experiments is that “The purpose of the games is to be a tool for research” (Brandt 2006, 58). The results of her game design prototypes for the declared objective of co-designing are relevant for this discourse as the conclusions of these studies demonstrate how the use of games during co-design allows to share the references in order to bridge different points of view because the games provide

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2 – Definition of *gamification* from the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary: [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com) (October 2017).

3 – Supra, pag. 135.

a common platform for the conversation between all the participants (Brandt and Messeter 2004). The other condition that a game can supply for the process of co-design is the “possibility to create an environment that is manipulable and well bounded. By creating and playing the games, it is possible to learn about the concepts the game makers and the game players hold” (Brandt 2006, 58). Having these two connecting premises, it is relevant to investigate, related to the urban space planning possible applications, the proposal made by Brandt that defines four types of exploratory games for co-design: *The User Game*, *The Landscape Game*, *The Technology Game* and the *Scenario Game* (Brandt and Messeter 2004, 123, 125, 126, 128). All of these games are based on the scenario approach as she demonstrates that “Constructing scenarios has for long been recognized as a powerful vehicle in designing interaction” (Brandt and Messeter 2004, 121). Similarly, the project of Nevicata14 provided a scenario, or based environment (or more accurately a scenography) that proved to be successful in encouraging interaction and participation on one hand, and, on the other hand, in giving further insights for the design team and help them imagine new strategies for the future use of that specific area.

Back to the research of Eva Brandt and the testing of the four co-design games we can find different qualities of each one of them in the process of design. The User Game, is played like a board game and all the participants create during the session interrelated stories of one fictive user but always relating the actions to a real location that is documented with videos from field studies. The stories are narrated using alternatively cards with photos and words and one rule is to always have a connection between the story of each subsequent player (Brandt and Messeter 2004, 123-125). This is how this game encourages dialogue between the players and at the same time is of use for the designers because it becomes a way of finding and then testing new design aspects that come from entering into a simulation of the user's environment.

This game can also be continued with the second one, The Landscape Game, where the user introduced previously is further constructed related to the context and physical surroundings and so the video cards from the previous game are here the “trace cards” with photos of the physical setting of the place of action. The boards to play on are designed with various geometrical schemes of layouts representing possible settings of the action. Using all this material and some video recording, the players were asked in one experimental case to “create images of future office environments using the persons and the game-pieces presented” (Brandt and Messeter 2004, 126). One interesting outcome from playing

this game was that “Common for the plays are that the game materials based on ethnographic video-recordings help the participant getting insight into specific life-worlds of potential users” while “the ambiguity of the game material” is exactly the one that “opens for various views and understandings” (ibid.).

The third game explored in the research is the Technology Game which is focused on creating services and products for users that are active in different social environments. Using foam models and LEGO® bricks to illustrate possible functions of these devices, for a video recorded user in the different contexts, the main result of the game was a scenario that was to be developed around the central task that was “to develop future use scenarios and associated IT concepts in collaboration between potential users, industrial partners and researchers, which reflect design issues and use qualities related to contextualization and connectivity” (Brandt and Messeter 2004, 127). The results from these three games can be connected and synthesized through the fourth one, The Scenario Game, which would arrive to possible future scenarios using all together the person from The User Game, the physical context from The Landscape Game and the products from The Technology Game. This game’s main task as formulated by the designer is “to get an understanding of how the participants made sense of the relationship between product concept, physical and social context” (Brandt and Messeter 2004, 129). One notable observation from playing The Scenario Game is that by not giving the players predesigned props and instead encouraging them to make their own it employs them stronger in the design tasks. Moreover, throughout the testing of all these four games, as the designers observe the importance of using various objects with related significance in the play because they build together a common language between all participants and help them in decision making. Secondly, what delivered more in the deciding making of the next move it was the “the temporary shift in focus from the goals (...) to the rules of the game” (ibid.). Therefore, it seems that it is exactly this centering on the rules was what, in the end, strongly contributed to engaging the players into a dialogue and to boost their imagination and creativity.

It can be said, that no seeking for the goal of the game is a prediction of the “expressive behavior” as formulated by Abraham Maslow by revealing the personality of the user (Maslow 1954, 29). So, for the designer of co-design games this could be a secondary outcome from playing this participative and interactive strategies. If the game encourages the players to focus on the rules rather than the goal, this can help the game designer not only to get the results of the game but also to have an insight of the personalities of the player.

## Conclusion

Johan Huizinga shows that “A play-community generally tends to become permanent even after the game is over” (Huizinga 1938, 12) and this underlines how the game influences the coagulation of new communities because the way players act inside a game is what reveals their personality consequently breaking the barriers between the strangers. This is why it is necessary to understand what the nature of playing is in order to have the basis for an inquiry in what are the implications of play in a common act, a co-action, and even further in co-design and participative design. In this way, the design thinking that emerges from play can definitely be seen as a resource for designers, especially when there is need for co-designing. Not only the act of play engages participants, but it also becomes a way of understanding them, which, are two important conditions for the process of co-design to offer qualitative results. Co-design can become even more motivating for all the participants if it approaches them throughout the *ludic* inner self as a general condition and only afterwards materializes the process into the most suitable forms of play.

In a more practical way, it has been shown that, this range of co-designing games is the most relevant when it focuses on creating possible future scenarios as “The notion of scenarios as open-ended narratives describing artifacts in use is very powerful for participatory design” (Brandt and Messeter 2004, 129) and it can be materialized into board games on a small scale, or even in temporary public facilities like in the case of the Nevicata14 project. From the case studies of co-design games analyzed by Brandt and the Nevicata14 urban initiative, we can underline two interesting guidelines for participative game strategies design. One is to leave space for ambiguity and interpretations but at the same time to offer access to materials that illustrate realistic situations to which the participants can relate to.

Secondly, it is more fruitful to encourage the players to modify or to create the game elements themselves because in order to arrive to innovation and actively use the game in co-design, the condition of freedom should also be ensured, as a basic freedom is central to play in order to stimulate distraction and fantasy. Roger Caillois argues how “this liberty is its indispensable motive power and is basic to the most complex and carefully organized forms of play” (Caillois 1958, 27).

In future investigations of the game as co-design tool, this is the next challenge: to calibrate the sense of freedom when all the games have the goal that the game creator is following when he designs it. Because not calibrating this, the game as a co-design tool would become a fragile concept and hard to be supported if we take in consideration the way Huizinga states that “all play is a voluntary activity. Play to order is no longer play: it could at best be but a forcible imitation of it” (Huizinga 1938, 7). Probably only in this manner the game can be used as a method to discover the identity of the players, and in the case of architects, the identity of an area from the users of the space. Therefore, it seems that one essentially important condition is always trying to balance the core values and characteristics of playing with the intentional process that co-design is and this without simultaneously denying them.

**“Since some parts of our identity depends from the places we lived in and we live in, this means that place identity is a social-psychological system created throughout our relationships with our places, by which they are able to co-determine who we are”**

**(Marino Bonaiuto)**

## Interview to Marino Bonaiuto

### CIRPA Director - Inter University Centre for Research in Environmental Psychology

Nicola Rainisio

Marino Bonaiuto is an eminent scientist and professor. He leads the Inter-University Centre for Research in Environmental Psychology (CIRPA), the most prestigious Italian institution in this field. His countless scientific contributions address environmental evaluation, sustainable behaviors and the relationship between subjective experience and the environment. The following interview is complementary to the essay presented above, as he gives us new insights about the existence of a “urban mind” and the significant role of the *optimal experiences* in shaping our *place identity*.

**In a recent study (*Optimal Experience and Personal Growth: Flow and the Consolidation of Place Identity, Frontiers in Psychology*, 2016) you and your colleagues addressed the relationship between *place identity* and *optimal/flow* experiences. How would you define the concept of *place identity*?**

The concept of *place identity* can be broadly and simply defined as the fact that a part of our own identity is related to the places of our past and of our present. Our identity, namely the way we define ourselves, has a crucial psychological importance in at least two ways: on the one side, it derives from our experiences and relations; and, on the other side, once it is created it then contribute to shape our ideas, our attitudes, and our actions. Our identities can be made essentially from three main types of

experiences: those we have as a single individual, differently from all other persons (i.e., a personal identity); those we have as a member of a social group or category (i.e., a social identity); and finally, those we have since we belong to certain places (i.e., a *place identity*). Therefore, we derive our sense of identity – i.e., our coherence and unity across time and space, our life meaning and planning, our everyday choices, etc. – also from the fact that we experience the places we live in, we work and study in, we sport in, we leisure in, we consume in, etc. (*place identity*). Now, once our identity (and *place identity* too) is set (i.e., it is formed) it will contribute – together with other personal, social and situational factors – to affect and regulate our thoughts, feelings, attitudes and opinions, choices and decisions, and actions. Therefore, our identity is important not only because is a repository of our past (and in this way it helps us to understand and give meaning to our own and to our experiences and actions); but also because our identity is a guide for our future orientations (it thus orients attitudes, choices, intentions, behaviors). Since some parts of our identity depends from the places we lived in and we live in, this means that *place identity* is a social-psychological system created throughout our relationships with our places, by which they are able to co-determine who we are. To put it simply, *place identity* is the way our places are able to create ourselves, by affecting a part of our psychologies which in turn will affect how we will feel, how we will think, how we will act. And we have always to remember that a part of all our feelings, thoughts and actions will also be targeted back to our places (let us just think for example to the social and environmental sustainability of our own habits and life-styles).

**Do you think there is a significant connection between flow/optimal experiences and places?**

Yes, I do, definitely. That was actually the basic idea at the origin of our research article mentioned above. In fact, traditionally the focus has always been on the idea that the place experiences of a person would contribute to her/his own development of her/his *place identity*. In that scientific contribution we wanted to show that we also need to address the properties of the place experience, since probably there can be an added value played by the fact that not all activities bear the same identity-relevant consequences, as in fact the Eudaimonistic Identity Theory posits by stressing the importance of self-defining activities. After all, I think this idea can be very close to many other concepts in other social and human sciences (let us just think for a quick example to certain symbolic activities which are still important in our



secular urbanized western society, in terms of rites of passage). Of course there could be a range of possible features of activities which may merit a closer attention focus, but *Flow* is a particularly fascinating one as it is universal and globally absorbing the person, but it has not been studied before in terms of its relevance for both a person's identity and its reference to a place.

**Could you cite some practical examples (urban interventions, buildings, etc.) of a virtuous connection between subjective experience and place? Which features make these places becoming more “flowable” than others?**

That is a very interesting but more difficult question, since a satisfying reply would need a bit more of scientific knowledge than the present state of the art can offer. Actually, I think the first part of the question can be evidence based positively replied, more than the second part. I can recall for example a case study where those persons who developed a stronger local identity (in terms of the place they were living in) were able to adopt more sustainable behaviors, which in the specific case study corresponded to a lower consumption of tap water in their homes, and how this feature of their *place identity* was even able to compensate for the individual difference associated to a selfish-behavior (Bonaiuto et al. 2008, 947-967). The second part of the question I think is a fascinating one too: one possibility is to parallel it to ergonomics, but from our perspective we would need to consider not only the physical and psychophysical level, but also the social, cultural, symbolic one. The challenge can therefore be harder, but not impossible. I see here two main approaches which I think could be profitably embraced together. One is to exploit scientific knowledge about some universals which works across persons and cultures (e.g., green areas possesses restorative potential). Another one is to recognize the need for customizing and personalizing: for example, in our study mentioned in question one, results show that a range of various activities (i.e studying or working in public places, leisure activities in cultural places etc.) were identified by different persons as place located self-defining activities associated with the experience of. All this also calls for the need of always considering the interplay among activities and places, the one does not exist without the other: it is their reciprocal interplay to afford a place (but also a personal, or a social) identity's strengthening or leap.

**In your opinion, are there significant differences between urban identity and identification with another type of place (not urban)? Moreover, is the psychological development in a urban environment qualitatively different from that experienced elsewhere?**

It is well known that since the very last few years the World human population for the first time in history inverted the residential rural/urban ratio. This means that for the first time since ever we now have more people permanently or semi-permanently living within a city *vs.* a countryside. This bears consequences for the humankind place identity development. Again, a fascinating topic and many evidence based relevant issues. I just want to recall for example how simply a large (*vs.* small) city size affects many psychological features and how activities and evaluations carried out in a place are strictly connected (Bonaiuto and Bonnes 1996, 699-747); or how more urban (*vs.* more rural) children benefit more from an environmental education program, thus showing their relation with the natural environment is already different after very a few years of life (De Dominicis et al. 2017). Another recent fascinating field of inquire is the one dealing with the so-called “environmental epiphanies”: these are rare and psychologically strong and meaningful events (which in fact bear many characteristics in common with the experience of Flow), capable of psychologically involving the persons and therefore to bring her/him strong changes in their life, at the identity level too. Here again we see how the interplay among the place (particularly natural ones) and the human activity psychologically impacts on the individual identity by changing her/his way of considering her/himself and her/his relations to that place and in some cases to the whole environment.

***“Place identity* is the way our places are able to create ourselves, by affecting a part of our psychologies which in turn will affect how we will feel, how we will think, how we will act. And we have always to remember that a part of all our feelings, thoughts and actions will also be targeted back to our places”**

**(Marino Bonaiuto)**



SPACE

IDENTITY

POLICY

PROGRAM



## Policies and Urban Design

Gabriele Pasqui

### What is a (public) policy?

A public policy, according to William N. Dunn, is “the set of actions performed by a group of subjects (the actors), which are in some way related to the solution of a collective problem, ie a need, an opportunity or an unsatisfied demand, which is generally considered to be of public interest” (Dunn 1981).

As the Italian scholar Bruno Dente has underlined, this definition does not mean that the subjects of the action must be exclusively public, even if it is improbable that among those who act in relation to problems perceived as collective there are not actors with political and administrative legitimation. On the other side, Dunn’s definition does not say that all actions must be aimed at solving the problem: it is more than probable, indeed, that some of the actors would like to sidestep them. But above all, the definition does not say that public policies are only the activities carried out by public authorities. Other actors and interests are involved, specific policy networks are engaged in facing problems (perceived as) relevant in the public sphere. This means in other words that public policies are not tout court comparable to a function of the State or other public bodies (Dente 2011).

If we consider the project for Scalo Porta Romana presented in this book, under the general framework of an ecological strategy for the city, we

have to admit that this project should be described as dowels of a complex public policy. In this chapter I will try to discuss different aspects of the potential connections between design and policy processes.

### **What is a public problem?**

The first feature of the definition of public policies by Dunn is that they are connected with problems perceived as relevant in the public sphere. The question is: why and when a problem becomes *public*? Let us start with an example. Why the disposal of a rail yard in a city is a public problem? Which are the reasons for designing and implementing a public policy addressed to the reuse of a partially abandoned rail yard, such as the area of Porta Romana in Milan?

There are many possible answers to this question. First of all, the problem is not the same for all the actors involved. The actor who owns the areas (Sistemi Urbani, who manages the transformation of the rail yards for the public Railway company Ferrovie dello Stato), wants to get capital gains through the redevelopment, selling the areas at private developers for the highest possible value. The Municipality wants to generate new services, public and green spaces, housing and to strengthen the regional public transport system. The citizens, and especially local groups and associations, want to reuse the rail yards for local services and do not want new housing.

This means that the problem of the reuse of rail yards is perceived in different ways. We could say that it is not the same problem for all the actors. The identification of different representations and dimensions of the problem, in the design process, is the first analytical step to pursue. Public problems are social constructs, strictly connected with the processes of agenda setting.

### **What is an urban agenda?**

If we want to identify and understand the complex nature of a public problem we have to put it in the context of a wider urban agenda, whose characters depend on a complex process of agenda setting.

An urban agenda can be defined as a set of issues and their representations which a local political community (a network of actors in which public institutions play an important, but not exclusive, role) considers politically central and to which it commits its own collective effort and action, above all by pursuing and implementing public policies. The urban agenda is



influenced by different factors of a political and cultural nature. It depends on the local, national and supra-national political cycle, on the dominant rhetoric in the political discourse and in public opinion, on the interaction between choices of policy, on the construction of problems by the media and on the general vision that predominates in civil society and among citizens. The construction of the urban agenda does not lie exclusively in the hands of politicians or public administrations. Nevertheless, public actions can influence the agenda through a selective process which places some collective issues at the top of the agenda and excludes others.

In this phase the reuse of half-abandoned rail yards has been at the top of the Milanese urban agenda. The new Mayor Giuseppe Sala, elected in 2016, has declared that the redevelopment of the rail yards is a strategic occasion for the redefinition of the spatial development of the city. For this reason, each project for the rail yards, and also the “ecological” project for Porta Romana presented and discussed in this book, should take into consideration the role of the rail yards in the general urban strategies represented in the urban agenda. The urban design of each railway area has to be considered part of a wider urban strategy, that is both spatial and socio-economic.

### **Which kind of policies are urban policies?**

If we want to build up an urban strategy for the reuse of big areas, such as the rail yards in Milan, we need not only good design strategies, but also complex integrated urban policies. An urban policy is not sectoral, even if it is strictly connected to different sectoral policies. For example, an urban policy for the rail yards is necessarily integrated with environmental, infrastructural, housing and economic issues.

### **Which are the characters of urban policies?**

According to Allan Cochrane, urban policies actively shapes the ways in which people live in cities. As well as reflecting contemporary understandings of the role of cities in economic and social development, urban policy also helps to create those understandings. Definitions of urban policy are elusive in part because the term appears so self-explanatory. It seems to be no more and no less than the sum of those policies that are intended to help cities or those living in them. Unfortunately, however, this commonsense approach is ultimately not very helpful – since most of us now live in urban areas of one sort or another, almost all public policy might be deemed to be urban policy. Assessing quite why one particular form of policy intervention attracts the soubriquet *urban* while another does not is more difficult than at first appears. Although there is a

superficial continuity in the emphasis on *urban areas* rather than particular welfare client groups, the definition of the *urban* on which policy attention is focused has itself varied significantly, even if this has rarely been acknowledged by those making or implementing the policies (Cochrane 2007). A policy is urban if it is involved in the definition and treatment of an urban problem, spatially defined, in which different dimensions can be recognized and enacted.

Paolo Fareri, an important scholar in the field of urban policies (Fareri 2009), underlines that these policies are integrated with respect to different dimensions of sector intervention (urban planning, environment, public green, local welfare, local economic policies and active labor, home, transport and mobility policies, security, etc.). Moreover, urban policies can be considered as an experimental field of institutional and social innovation, in relation to the emergence of problems (perceived as) crucial in the urban sphere.

### **What is a policy process?**

Public policies are not decisions. They are complex processes involving a set of actors, interests, strategies and forms of rationality. Literature has identified different stages of policy process (issue identification, agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption and legitimization, policy implementation). In a policy process, there is uncertainty about objectives and outcomes, and also ambiguity about the nature of the problems and the matching between problems and solutions.

If we consider carefully the policy process that has led to the definition of a new planning framework for the railway areas in Milan (Pasqui 2017), we can observe that the process has been long and not linear, with changes in the nature of the problem and in the features of the solutions. This means that a design strategy that comes at the end of a complex process should take into account this complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty. The design strategy should not be a definite “final state of the world”, but a part of a process, where different possibilities are open and time matters.

Designing in contexts of uncertainty and ambiguity means imagining a flexible, open and dynamic design path. For all these reasons, a project for urban environments should also be a flexible temporal strategy that is able to identify alternative possibilities and bifurcations. This is the main argument for the experimentation of temporary uses, that could be the tools for opening the areas to citizens and different public and private uses in the short period.

### **Why conflicts matter?**

If policy processes are complex, uncertain, ambiguous, we cannot forget that they are also conflicted. If we analyze the policy process concerning the rail yards in Milano, we can see that many different processes have taken place in the last 10 years. It is important to reflect on the fact that these processes were not only traditional conflicts between contrasting interests and actors sharing the same cultural framework. This is only a part of the story. Following a suggestion by the Italian sociologist Alessandro Pizzorno (1993), we can identify three different kind of conflicts in the urban context.

In the interest conflicts the parties belong to the same system of relations and the conflicts are pluralistic and not exclusive. In the recognition conflicts a social group enters the conflict in order to impose the recognition of its own distinct identity that is non-negotiable and that can be constituted and/or strengthened in the conflict. In the ideological conflicts one or both sides present themselves with a universalistic presumption, and then arrangements and mediations are often difficult.

In the context of Milanese urban transformations all these kinds of conflicts can be observed. The distinction between different typologies of conflicts is important for urban designers, because these conflicts are representative of different expectations and social demands. Some of these expectations and demands probably should not be taken into consideration in the design strategy, but the project should take care of different conflicted positions.

### **When (and why) can a policy be effective?**

The effectiveness of a public policy depends on two different dimensions. On one side, the choice of specific policy (and planning, and design) tools that fit with a specific problem and context. On the other side, the design of forms and practices of interaction that can generate positive social mechanisms. According to Salamon “a tool, or instrument, of public action can be defined as an identifiable method through which collective action is structured to address a public problem” (Salamon 2002, 20). Each tool plays a role in the process of distinguishable policy design, and structures the networks of actors (for example, positioning them on the basis of advantages or disadvantages in carrying out certain actions) in response to certain public problems.

There are different typologies of policy tools (rules and regulations, incentives, agreements, information and communication, standards and best practices), but what is crucial is the fact that each tool should be chosen not on the basis of a given blueprint, but in connection with the specific problem and context. On the other side, that policy tools are not political neutral, and the selection of one instrument or another for a policy intervention will generate political activity and have political consequences. More importantly, political factors and political mobilization affect the initial selection of instruments and the ultimate implementation of policy. Attempting, therefore, to assess policy outcomes without also considering the means to be employed to achieve those ends as well as the politics shaping tool choices is likely to result in potentially faulty policy decision.

Good and adequate policy tools are not enough. Each policy process is a social interactive process, in which institutions, social and economic collective actors, citizens are involved in complex forms of cooperation and conflict. For this reason, the correct identification and design of policy tools should be paired by the promotion of effective social mechanisms. A mechanism is a pattern of influence among actors that can activate or strengthen the social resources, coordinating efforts of the actors (individuals, institutions) in order to reach the expected results. It is not possible to forecast the future behaviour of social actors, but through the identification of social mechanisms it is possible to favour cooperative processes and to reduce conflicts.

The identification of policy tools and the attempt to promote effective social mechanisms are parts of the fundamental implementation activity. When a policy decision is taken, and when a design tool is defined, it is necessary to design an implementation strategy, able to work in time e through time, to face surprises and unexpected events.

Policy implementation can be defined as the last stage of policy cycle and it means an institutional, administrative and social process in which various actors, organization, procedures, and techniques work together to put adopted policies into effect in an effort to attain policy or policy goals (Barrett and Fudge 1981; Bardach 1977). Implementation is not only a technical procedure. Policy implementation can be seen as a tension generating force in society between and within different components of the implementing process: idealized policy, implementing organization, target group, and environmental factors. The tensions result in transaction patterns which may or may not match the expectations of outcome of the policy formulators. When a project is completed, its implementation has to be started, as the next section of this book, about *program*, shows clearly.

### **Why institutional arrangements matter?**

Even if a policy is not only the action promoted by public body, institutional frameworks and arrangements are crucial in order to enhance the effectiveness of a public policy.

If we consider the design issues connected with the transformation of the rail yards in Milan, it is clear the role of public institutions is important not only because each urban transformation is regulated by planning schemes and rules, but also because there are different fundamental key passages in the process that can be managed only by the public administration. If the public administration is not able to define clearly the regulative framework, the uncertainty grows up and the effectiveness decreases.

Institutional arrangements can be interpreted also as different formal and informal regimes and coalitions for collective action and inter-agent coordination, ranging from public-private cooperation and contracting schemes, organizational networking to policy arrangements. These arrangements are commonly defined as the *rules of the game*, including norms, beliefs, values, habits and behaviour. They include both formal and informal arrangements, they can range from local to global level, and may give rise to compliance or resistance. Actor-structure interactions frequently include ambiguities and competing claims that result from path-dependence. Consequently, many actors are simultaneously involved in multiple, and sometimes conflicting, institutional arrangements.

Without effective institutional arrangements, the policy process should not be able to develop in time, and different forms of paralysis, conflicts, and decisional stalls can take place.

### **How urban design can be integrated in a policy process?**

Urban design, for example the projects for Scalo Porta Romana that are presented in this book, can be integrated in a complex policy process if design strategies are able to interact with the different dimensions of the policy process (problem setting, implementation, conflicts, tools and mechanisms, institutional arrangements). This integration is coherent with a conception of public policies that identifies three different ideas of a policy.

The first one is the idea of policy as decision. A policy is also an event that breaks consolidated equilibriums, produces new states of the world and new meanings. This dimension cannot be avoided



and implies the idea of public action as an unbalancing activity. The second one is the idea of policy as social interaction. Policy activity not only occurs in a plural context (many actors, many interests, many values, many visions of the world), but is intrinsically produced “via interaction”. The third one is the idea of policy as exploration. In this sense policies are cognitive practices, in which hypotheses and interpretations are “tested” and “probed” (Lindblom 1990). The activity of policy making in this declination is an “inquiry” activity, in the perspective of the theory of inquiry by John Dewey. This inquiry activity also has a *social* and transactive nature.

What is interesting is that also design (urban and architectural) can be defined as a decision, breaking spatial equilibrium and identifying new formal possibilities; as a process of social interaction involving designers, clients, institutions, citizens; as an experimental research process. Urban design and urban policy should work together: only if the policy dimension is integrated in the design process, and vice versa, it is possible to experiment an effective process of urban change.

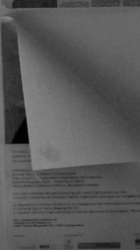




**ENJOI LOCALI**  
L'idea di un nuovo spazio di incontro e di incontro  
per i giovani della città di Milano. Un progetto  
che si realizza in un luogo storico, in un  
palazzo del centro storico, in un luogo  
che ha visto la nascita di molte  
iniziative culturali e sociali.

#### VIA ABBIATI 4 UNO SPAZIO DI

Un progetto che si realizza in un luogo storico, in un palazzo del centro storico, in un luogo che ha visto la nascita di molte iniziative culturali e sociali. Un progetto che si realizza in un luogo storico, in un palazzo del centro storico, in un luogo che ha visto la nascita di molte iniziative culturali e sociali.





## The Feed-back Policy Strategies to Supply the Design Process

Gianfranco Orsenigo

Our cities are *full of voids*, a collection of abandoned areas that in the past hosted production plants, railway stations, military barracks, consortium offices, just to give some examples, which can be considered today an important heritage and opportunity for the future development of the surrounding contexts. In these places, transformations have often been braked for different reasons. On one hand, because these areas are *full* in terms of income potential, but there is no more space on the market for the traditional residential and commercial transformation operations, which in the past represented the driving force of real estate development. On the other hand, because they are *full* of elevated expectations by many entities, from public administrations to trade associations and groups of citizens, that consider them as an opportunity to increase the supply of goods and services for the community. All of this determines the uncertain and conflicting nature of their transformations, often making them places of abandonment.

Along with the crisis, that affected the western world in the last years, “it is hoped that this heritage will be back useful” (Indovina 2014, 411) through the elaboration of a series of urban regeneration projects that put in contact the design of spaces with the management of processes, imagine synergies between public and private, integrate urban policies and invest

in social quality and community innovation. What emerges is the need to change the design attitude, envisioning scenarios with a new different point of view on future transformations, which does not immediately advance solutions but reflects on the formulation of the right questions. This new attitude requires broader skills to understand all the components that influence the context, developing a collaborative approach in which the different individuals involved, starting from the professionals, share their knowledge and influence each other. The outcome is the design of an *open project*, capable of redefining itself according to the feedback received about the specific actions put in place during its application, able to seize the opportunities without being forced into predetermined timeline charts and to reinterpret creatively the procedural rules.

In this perspective, the application of policies can be useful, since it allows projects, developed as processes, to overcome their inertia and, when those policies act, to make otherwise intractable problems resolvable (Perrone 2014, 381). This can happen on one side thanks to the activation of interaction and participation processes, on the other subdividing the general intervention in smaller fragments capable of influencing the everyday life and making visible new lifestyles (Jegou and Manzini 2008, XX), displaying the urban regeneration program in a cultural process that starts directly from places (Hannerz 1992, XX).

Opening to policy allows to redirect the gaze towards actions and forms of social interaction aimed to treating public - or perceived as public - problems, evaluating the impacts that the expected and/or produced effects of the policy have on the urban regeneration process. It is interesting to observe experiences in which the interaction aims at elaborating a specific project rather than ruling on general issues. According to the interpretation of the policy, the experience of the Dessau development program Urban Cores – Landscape Zones will be observed, within the International Building Exhibition (IBA) Urban Redevelopment, Saxony-Anhalt 2010, trying to outline a design attitude capable of responding to extremely complex situations with a proactive and adaptive strategy.

### **Policy, public and stakeholders**

Before proceeding, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of some terms. Speaking of *policy*, among all the different definitions available, I am referring to the one by Dunn, that describes the public policy as the set of actions, carried out by a group of individuals (stakeholders), in some way related to the solution of a collective problem, “an unrealized need, value or opportunity which (...) may be attained through public action” (Dunn

1981, 60). The *public*, as it is understood in this essay, is not to be taken as a datum or exclusively with reference to the property of an institution but it is the result of the recognition and taking charge of a certain situation, starting from its problems, carried out by a series of people who may or may not play institutional roles. A wider concept of public, that favours the perception of existing issues, seems to be more appropriate to the actual condition, that is characterized by a higher level of consciousness of the players about the necessity of defining new interaction models between institutions and social local subjects. This can be realized thanks to the application of *top-down* and *bottom-up* initiatives, capable of collecting wishes and overcoming conflicts, as it happened in the last century with the social movements of the seventies or the so-called NIMBY *Syndrome* since the eighties.

As *stakeholders*, that are active during the process, are meant to be those individuals – singular or collective – “that express a unitary and identifiable aim within the process itself” (Fareri 2009, 26). Always quoting Paolo Fareri, the goals can refer to the content of the policy or to the process, recalling the role that actors play in the process of participation. It is possible to schematically subdivide the whole of stakeholders in promoters, beneficiaries and facilitators, remembering that within a complex project-process, that is articulated in different moments and actions, a specific participant can play different roles. Actors become an active part of the process because they carry various types of interests: general ones, that involve the whole process, or specific ones, that are limited to only one or a few issues.

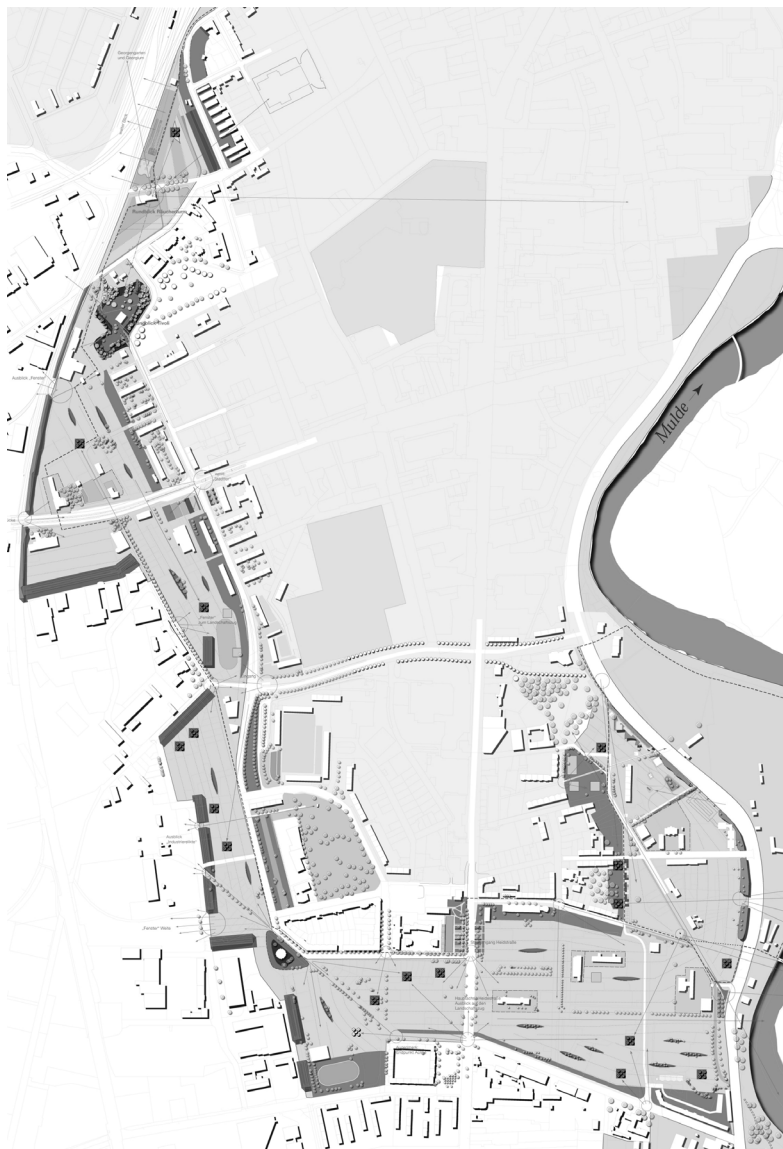
By participating to the project, stakeholders become available to share their economic, political, cognitive and sometimes also working resources and to accept eventual disequilibrium in this collaborative process.

### **The Laboratory of the International Building Exhibition (IBA) Urban Redevelopment, Saxony-Anhalt 2010<sup>1</sup>**

The IBA Urban Redevelopment 2010 was born in 2002 from the will of the state government of Saxony-Anhalt to tackle the question of the shrinkage. This experience has faced unknown issues and decided to transform it in a cultural policy about the urban redevelopment. In a period of social change, that policy has outlined some paths of treating the recovery of areas that seem useful and meaningful for the contemporary

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1 – Refer to [www.open-iba.de](http://www.open-iba.de) and catalogue of exhibition (Oswalt 2010).



brownfields. It looks like the best practice, for example, to the vacant railway yards in many Italian cities.<sup>2</sup> The exhibition has set the aim of tackling the specific situation of the shrinking cities and to respond with policy objectives. Shrinkage is taken on board as a challenge, as a starting point for an innovative approach in the design and planning of towns and cities under conditions of economic and demographic decline. The emergency of this challenge is shown by the political will to take it in a “courageous and proactive way” (Oswalt 2010, 25), adding to the institutional program of development Stadtumbau Ost, a cultural policy: the IBA2010 “Less Is Future”.

The phenomenon of shrinkage is not new but what characterized the East Germany was the rapidity with which it has happened. Following the reunification of Germany, many territories, and especially those of the East, have had to face a process of radical social change: migrations as a result of deindustrialization, demographic change - aging of citizens and decreasing of income - associated with phenomena of suburbanisation that have determined the decrease of population with 20%, sometimes 30%, in ten years, leading to residential buildings being left empty, an over-extended infrastructure and abandoned industrial areas. The scale of the phenomenon transforms it by an economic and social issue in a shift of paradigm in terms of political, social and economic developments, which politics have to address.

The IBA2010 was understood by the government of Saxony-Anhalt as an instrument to react to the shift of paradigm, the *development without growth*, starting to speak about it, to conceptualize it for the design of it. The IBA2010, with the contribution of the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation and the State Development Company SALEG, was thought as an *experimental laboratory*, more process than object-oriented, where various urban redevelopment tools would be tried and put to test. Right from the beginning the initiative had to face with two challenges. One, they take a step into an unknown issue without a clear question. The other was the fact that they were not equipped with a large financial budget. These challenges were assumed as the contemporary conditions. The choice

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2 – AgriUrbana, the project design in the Architectural, Urban and Interior Design PhD program at Politecnico of Milan and described in this book, tries to reveal the possibility of these spaces if it is looked in an innovative glance.

was to focus more on the *software* of the cities, the cultural and social resources they already had, rather than building *lighthouse* architecture or infrastructure. In order to apply the program, the 19 communities were forced to develop a new specific conceptual image for the city based on their specific potentials: the history and its identifying characteristics. Citizen participation was a crucial element on one hand identifying the local talents, on the other to raise the awareness of the inhabitants on the theme. The results were 19 cities – 19 themes. The ideas were under constant review to ensure that a theme correctly captured the identity and potential of the town, whether and which urban stakeholders could endorse the vision and the methods embraced by the theme.

The IBA2010 could seem as an unusual urban policy. It worked like external elements able of reacting local contexts. Without it, it could not have been thinkable a strong cultural reaction to shrinkage by each city. Beyond traditional planning and architectural strategies, various methods and tools were used to stimulate innovation in the place-based development process, such as moderation, coaching, and networking. At the same time the dialogue between cities and towns, local end state administrators, companies and professionals involved was considered beneficial. A useful tool for this was the Urban Network Conference. Two conferences per year structured a platform for the exchange of experience among the towns. They served to provide information about the IBA process status in the respective cities and to present and criticize the project. At the same time, they were opportunities to exchange ideas within a wider framework. The tight scan of the times helped to constantly check the process, to make the corrections and adjustments needed, and to update priorities.

To synthesize, promoting an open-end approach based on interaction has two general benefits: the first one, more palpable, the processes of the cities are going on even after the exhibition closes; the second, more culturally, shows that the various “stakeholders can form themselves into an *investigating community*, capable of mutual and collective learning among co-protagonists” (Scalvi 2010, 6).

### **Urban Cores – Landscape Zone a pixelated process for Dessau-Roßlau**

The city of Dessau, Dessau-Roßlau after the merge in 2007, was one of the nineteen cities of the IBA2010 exhibition. In 1989, Dessau was still one of the major industrial centre of the GDR. After reunification, the fused twin city struggled with the economic and demographic repercussion of deindustrialization. Dessau-Roßlau was and it is getting smaller. Demolitions on a scale never seen before have become necessary.

It was a long process before to recognise how old growth concepts would not prevail. New paths were taken over the course of the IBA2010 to be able to respond flexibly to change and to make the city fit for the future. Dessau-Roßlau participated to the IBA2010 under the theme Urban Cores – Landscape Zones, a spatial concept for remodelling the town. The task was to prevent a disordered perforation on the city caused by shrinkage. The concept is meant as a flexible, long-term strategy. It consists of two main goals: firstly, the stabilization of vital urban cores imagined stable during the shrinking process, secondly the implementation of new landscape zones, running through the urban cores instead of demolished constructions.

As being mentioned before, I do not wish to describe all the projects but highlight, through a few steps, how dealing with the policy issue can generate effects to feed the regeneration process.<sup>3</sup> I will focus more on the activation of the landscape zones. To face the shrinkage at the beginning of the new millennium, with the Bauhaus Dessau and the IBA Office, the town organized an interdisciplinary workshop with numerous participants. The workshop brought together economists, infrastructure and water waste specialists, citizens, urban planners, landscape planners etc. The discussion resulted in the start of an open process, that was intended to last for twenty to thirty years, to react flexible to changes, both in time and space.

*Generating resources.* Instead of a masterplan, they imagined to bring out the new landscape with a series of agreements. The city was symbolically reduced to pixels to bring the envisioned changes down to a manageable scale. The envisaged corridor of green areas can be recovered piece by piece, plot by plot, as it becomes available. But there was not a manageable number of holders. The ninety hectares of the potential corridor, from the railway station to the south of the city, were fragmented by about a thousand individual owners. It must be mentioned that a demolition consensus plan, set up with the three biggest players in the housing sector, had already failed because of the competition between them on the housing market. This is how the city started a meaningful and long effort on the property problem. Some of these properties were owned by bankrupt companies so the mayor of the city visited the bankers, showing them that there were not market conditions to find buyers and so he convinced them to sell back the properties, often for the symbolic price

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3 – For an in-depth description of the project please refer <http://verwaltung.dessau-rosslau.de>.

of one euro. On the other hand, many owners were willing to exchange, demolition goods for properties in redeveloped areas. This meant that the city could get double resources reinforcing both the urban core and the landscape zones.

The administration by itself could not manage this complex process. So, they founded several topical workgroups for planning, land-use management and public relations, bringing together all the important protagonists of the city: from the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation and housing companies, university, savings bank and The Chamber of Industries and Commerce to private initiatives. The resources for demolition were from the European and federal state program while the citizens energies were urgent in order to activate the left spaces. The need to show in short time that conversion had taken place there and to promote involvement among the citizens suggested the organization of a claim “400 sq.m. of Dessau”. Under the new term of *culturing*, the city offered to citizens, initiatives and third associations, the opportunity to take on sponsorship for a claimed area of land. Measuring 20 x 20 meters, these *Claims* have the manageable size and can be designed and maintained quite easily by citizens, families or groups. The administration encouraged people to own land, accept responsibility and upkeep spaces. Completed projects include a beekeeping garden, a pharmacy garden, a multicultural garden, an area for BMX bikers and a short rotation plantation for rapid-growing biomass. This form of citizen appropriation of newly created urban spaces produces new sites with an individual atmosphere and aesthetics. It is no longer the representative park but rather a new type of townscape that grows up out of the concrete action taken by participants and obtains its value from its design by a group.

*Mediation – Communicating urban redevelopment and improving negotiation skills.* The *Claims* experience revealed the shrinkage question and at the same time the resources of the city. It showed also the fragility of a pixelated process. At the beginning a lot of emphasis was put on the claims with large-scale events in May and September, but all of these disappeared during the rest of the year. The objective was a general buzz about the theme of urban redevelopment as a reaction to the social change. The IBA Office in Dessau-Roßlau developed a global strategy of mediation using print media, radio and events that enabled gaining specific experience. Workshops, walks as performance, large billboards that have been artistically modified making visible the intervention of citizens became usual. It was also developed the *Read Thread* in order to show that each transformed fragment was a piece of a complex plan. A broad asphalt path was flanked by red arrows showing the way of the *Read Thread*. A



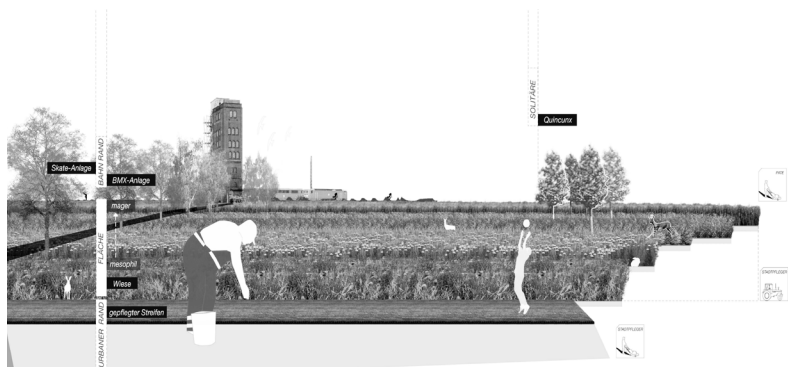
guideline and information system leading people along the green zones and the milestones of the redevelopment plan. It was an instrument to familiarize citizens with the physical and cultural transformation. In the Am Leipziger Tor district was opened a contact centre attempting to draw greater attention to the district about both the urban redevelopment (in the context of fear over the demolitions) and the socially aspects. The contact office ensured better networking and joint actions not only to encourage physical renovations but also to support fragile populations: youth, women, unemployed and seniors.

*Innovation in actions through cooperation.* The program raised up with the experience of the claims disclosed that a new kind of park was possible. It turned out that it was necessary to deepen the concept of which type of park it was needed and how to get it. The design and aesthetics of the new green zones were thoroughly debated in public. The final decision was in the favour of extensive landscapes using meadows that only need mowing once a year and that also allow biodiversity. With the support of the landscape office Station C23 it was carried out the concept-image of the *Landschaftszug Dessau*<sup>4</sup> (landscape stretch), a navigation tool (Langner 2014, 18), under the unpredictable conditions of the shrinkage. It serves as a framework for process-oriented development and selective interventions, which function as catalysts for development processes. In such interventions, individual measures or experiments allow one to observe, verify and evaluate their effect within a reasonably comprehensible context. How to design and maintain the green corridor requires a context-, process-, and dialogue-oriented practice. For the small scale, the more intensively managed part of the new landscape and the closest to inhabited neighbourhoods, the maintenance is carried out by the municipality. Where meadowlands join to form extensive areas, the farmers undertake large-scale maintenance. In addition, as mentioned before, the citizens are given the opportunity to occupy pieces of land by staking out a so-called claim, thereby contributing to the cultural and physical appropriation of the new open landscape. Alliances among citizens, politicians, housing companies, landscape architects, engineers, farmers, and others are constantly being initiated and stimulated through the rebuilding of the landscape stating the dynamic ecological and social processes.

As it was in the beginning intention, the process is still on-going and adapting itself to the actual conditions.

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4 – Refer to [www.stationC23.de](http://www.stationC23.de) and (Per and Mozas 2011).



## The centrality of the Problem Setting and the role of a Policy Approach

The original aspects of this experience describe the efficacy of a design attitude that we can define as *mite* (meek) (Infussi 2007) in a period in which everyone designs as an individual and as a community member.

I suggest calling *progetto mite* that practice of design able to presuppose the least number of aspects possible, among those that concern it. (...) The design activity orients and from meanings to existent energies that in this way can be recognized and liberated, constructs interactively the scenarios as principles to which it invites to adhere, it is destined to trigger processes, not automatically to conclude them, producing, first, criteria for evaluating indeterminate situations. (Infussi 2007, 68)

This is a necessary attitude to face the complexity and uncertainty of contemporary regenerations. The project becomes a process where it practices the disciplinary contaminations, sensible to common knowledge and to what society expresses out of the established paths. From a *primarily problem solving* approach we move to a *primarily problem setting* approach where the key moment of the design process more than the design of a solution, is the construction of the problem frame, through an *inter-active design* that orientates the treatment of complex issues. Once the framing objectives are fixed, possible trajectories can be identified along. This process is not a linear one but it remains adaptive and responsive “to be altered” by external factors. Time by time they use the opportunities and resources available at that moment, feeding and orientating the next steps.

In such situation the role of the design expert, or better of the design team, becomes central. The designer among stakeholders is not the isolated author of the project, but his roles are both to manage and feed the participation process and the advancement of the project contents.

(the expert) is required to structure a process of intervention on the content, building frames of reference, interpreting the territories, triggering through the proposition of scenarios design forms based on social interaction, translating informal practices in the language of policies, supporting the consolidation of dimensions of management, approaching promoters to additional resources, promoting the dissemination and transferability of experiences, reinforcing links and networks of the local to the urban and beyond. (Fareri 2009, 203)

As a “policy activist” (Fareri 2009) the designer frames the *field of project* made by places and engages stakeholders. From the point of view of a policy, and through its tools, the *field of project* becomes a place of “common goods” growth (Pasqui and Rabaiotti 1999) and where the idea of *collective interest* as the related question is constantly re-articulated, in favour of the transformation of places.









## **Policies for Spaces of Mutation Urban Activators as Time Traveler toward New Urban Scenarios**

**Federica Marchetti**

New forms and uses of the city space are emerging to fill the lack of identity of the urban environment in contemporary metropolis. It seems that the answers to solve this crucial modern problem are more and more shared, collective and collaborative, especially when it is not easy to find an economic interest in the redevelopment of suburban areas or urban voids. In many cases the solution starts with a bottom-up approach, becoming a natural integration of different aspects like in the not planned urban centres, because the city is in itself relational: a relation between people, space, time, uses etc. These people actions are linked to contemporary needs, most of the time related to the simply and basic necessity to have experience of the urban space at the human being scale (Gehl 2013, 3).

Considering the characteristics of our age, this phenomenon reflects itself in the mutable conditions of its features according with the spatial aspect and its uses: “spatial development no longer produces an outcome that is static and permanent. Instead it produces something in a state of flux” (Bergevoet and van Tuijl 2016, 43). This kind of situations are taking place in different cities and locations, starting to be a global tendency, especially in Europe and United States. In these new practices, secondly but not for importance, there is the role that new digital instruments can gain and already have during the processes. The questions, at this point, appear clear: exactly, what kind of action can practice the City Governance to take advantage from it? How it could be managed and how could work during the time, considering its variable condition?

Actually, we do not have a precise and global codification of these interventions and the first policies related to them. It is a phenomenon that should be studied little by little, especially because the cases aren't all ascribable into a single procedure or way to take into action the new urban transformations. What appears constant is the fact that the uncertainty is regulated having different open solutions. The results, that will be presented in this essay, have the ability to show these new perspectives for the city space involving all the ingredients described. Moreover, all these examples have already produced testable proofs that can be used as basic information for future projects. Analysing the spatial solutions already realized and some urban policies in progress is possible to trace answers to the starting questions.

### **Taking Inspiration from Urban Hacking**

*Urban hacking* is the first step, the term *hack*<sup>1</sup> comes from the digital language and it is related to a computer attack. These spontaneous events are not something negative or revolutionary, as the name could evoke.

The hack value of these instances is the connection between the particular space – its intended purpose and its history – and the revelatory transformation of the hack (...), the core of a truly successful hack in urban space involves, first, what the site means; second, how the hack appropriates the site; and third, how the hack transforms the site to communicate a message to a broad public. (Ratti and Claudel 2016, 1357)

An Urban Hack could be represented by a temporary use of the space, a pop-up installation, an event that shows new aspects for a specific place. All these actions and experiences are expressions of the needs and desires of the inhabitants for the city space. Especially thanks to the digital instruments, it is becoming easier to find these kind of situations, organized not just by single people but by communities, working as in a sort of continuous flash mob to improve the city spaces.

This first case does not imply active urban policies, it is just a spontaneous way of re-appropriation of the space by its inhabitants. At the same time, it can foster the definition of tools, guidelines and open instruments to

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1 – The term *hack*, in computer programming, means an illegal or unauthorized access to a computer, document, file or network. The 'hacker' is the hacking expert and use his skills to adapt a computer system to his needs. The journalist Randolph Ryan defined the word in an article, appeared on the Boston Globe in 1993, as a planned and organized action (in many cases with funny implications), but not disruptive.



take into consideration this public initiative, improving the public domain and informing architects and designers for the definition of urban design strategies. These experiences prefigure scenarios, as a sort of time travel toward a new vision for the city space and represent a way to reveal new possibilities to live the city. A crucial starting point to redefine something that could be changed according to people needs, business interests and territorial necessities. From informal situations, they could become a designed practice that involve experts – architects, urban designers, planners etc.. Then, it will be the City and its inhabitants to declare if the operation satisfies their desires and improve the city liveability. Otherwise a new design strategy could be re-set up and tested, reaching a more appropriate solution.

The role of the urban policy should be properly to transform the spontaneous actions into legal and planned interventions interpreted by architects and designers. The collaboration between designers, municipalities and people is defined by the kind of information and data that can be collected thanks to these new tools for the design brief. These operations imply the perspective that design strategy has to involve other inputs and consider more relations and interactions with the pre-existence situation.

Shifting Architecture beyond expert culture would require us to love, or at least tolerate, complexity and contradiction by denying architectural expertise a privileged status in the discourse of making. This dislocation does not in any way diminish expert responsibility (...). Even as we explore a move beyond expert culture, we affirm the power of architecture to make substantial contributions to the messy vitality of everyday life in service of the promise of lives well lived. (Schneekloth and Shibley 2000, 130)

Considering single and isolated cases that can describe these situations, there is the example of Mierīgi, an urban action by the collective Fine Young Urbanists in collaboration with the City of Riga. Defining an urban set, they displayed how you can change the people experience in a street adding colours, working on the street section, defining a new cycle path and new seats for the inhabitants. Mierīgi is a mock-up in 1:1 scale, the pre-figuration of an urban transformation that could become fixed in a second time. This kind of interventions represent the instable particle that urban policy program could manage working on its presence and mutation during the time in the urban space. At the same time, the urban policy can fix values to obtain a good urban practice, potentially replicable in the city environment. “Smart norms, protocols, procedures and considerations could develop which limit access or deny

urban participation to stakeholders, if they are developed conceptually, democratically and empirically unexamined, without priority attention being paid to investigating project ‘failures’” (Griffith 2016, 31).


What should prevent the possibilities to replay this isolated case in the urban environment? Which kind of tools the City can use? Urban policies should be able to manage larger situations that consider this approach and, in some cases, it is already happening. At present, there are some examples starting to act toward this direction. They are emerging in the last years and for this reason they have a certain dose of unpredictability in their results and possible evolutions. More the interest of different players is addressed toward them, more the numbers and the possible urban solutions will become larger. The importance of the actors is related to their skills and, according to this, architects and designers continue in their work with more awareness of what inhabitants, city governance and investors want and need. In particular, it is the interest of the City, expressed by new polices, that defines the role and the weight of the actors involved. In these first cases, urban policies are set up after the examination of what informally happens in the city. In particular the policies concern places not suitable for private business interests, but attractive for the need of common public spaces of the inhabitants. Considering the good opportunities that this approach brings to the urban space, what does it prevent to regulate it in a befitting way? Governance and designers involved in the city transformation should have the responsibility to propose this kind of solutions in specific places, identified as appropriate for social, economic and environmental aspects.

### **Pilot Policy Programs**

For this kind of operations, a *pilot* becomes a necessary instrument to test and experiment new form of urban policies linked with this emerging condition. It is the tool to manage the future development of the space and its use, passing from the totally unstable particle that rise from urban hacking, guerrilla actions or similar situations, to a process that can continue, fluid, during the time, working on a shared framework between people, designers, city governance and other stakeholders. According with “place-making” (Seamon 1996, 5), urban policies could manage “a very basic planning framework (...), rather than a masterplan. Incremental occupation mobilises demand and creates ‘a narrative and personality for the place’” (Bishop and Williams 2012, 188).

Setting up procedures, best practice and *light rules*, is the task that the City Governance could embrace in order to legalize something that in



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many cases is spontaneous. It is a process that can be regulated thanks to online and offline instruments. In particular, online tools could be suitable to manage big quantity of requests, they can connect a large number of people, designers and stakeholders and can represent an easy way to inform all the actors about the possibility that the Municipality has decided to put into practise. In these cases, the urban policy defines the new relations and give guidelines to improve the city liveability, for example: the kind of city space that should be improved (urban voids into squares or playgrounds, unused sidewalks into new vibrant public spaces etc.), the identification of possible new actors and businesses, the surrounding uses that could attract people, the pre-existing communities of the area to involve etc.

Reaching this description and starting from a Situationist experience,<sup>2</sup> we find the case of the program *Pavement to Park* proposed by the City of San Francisco.<sup>3</sup> Activated as an informal operation coming from the Parking Day, a festival – born, organized and diffused thanks to the web – where people transform parking lots in urban spaces suitable for their needs, now Pavement to Park counts more than 50 points in the city. From an informal event, it is become an official way to revitalize the city, because the City has formalized the idea to test, prototype and built new designed proposals for the urban space in a continuous state of project validation together with architects and people. A form of lean, easy and fast acknowledging by the governance that actually has added the possibility to work on the definition of new plazas and collective spaces. The City proposes, in a specific website, the procedure to start a project and in a second online page the possible uses suggested by the inhabitants. In this case, prototyping is an important instrument because can be “the point of departure for future stable programmes” (Haydn, Temel 2006, 72).

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2 – The program Pavement to Park has its roots in the Parking Day festivals: informal events where people actively propose new uses to reinterpret the city parking lots. This free and not programmed approach to the city space transformation remembers the situations proposed by the Situationist Movement during the late '50s and s'60s of the last century. Especially in Guy Debord works (*The Society of the Spectacle* in 1967 and previously *The Naked City* in 1957), the urban space reflects a personal narration during the time. According with this concept, people urban actions in San Francisco can be seen as subjective and temporary interpretation of the city.

3 – The City of San Francisco proposed five pilot examples of parking lots reinterpretations (parklets) in 2010. Now a larger program is set up in order to satisfy a series of issues: reimagining the potential of the city streets, encouraging non-motorized transportations, enhancing pedestrian safety and activities, to foster neighbourhood interactions and support local businesses. Source: <http://www.pavementtoparks.org/> (January 2018).



Similar principles regulate the *Freezones*<sup>4</sup> in the park of Delft University of Technology (the Netherlands), a program thought and put into action by the TU Delft. In this case the framework is already defined: in the Mekel Park we find the presence of specific areas technically ready to be used by students to organize small events, parties, common activities. Electricity, water and space: then it is up to people to live the place, using imagination and creativity. This University initiative could be an interesting example also for the governance of the city especially for unused spaces or abandoned green areas: it could give new opportunities for the people to have experience of the city space and define by themselves new uses and activities. The basic supports for the urban transformation should be regulated by specific urban policies that can legalize the accessibility to the areas, manage the relations between the actors involved, establish the benchmarks to reach. In order to transform and give quality to the city space, policies should guarantee a pattern of possible relationships and all the norms, trying to maintain a light approach considering the bottom-up nature of this kind of processes. The successful results of these projects come from their easy and fast execution, especially when we relate them to other complex and longer urban transformations. It is very simple to colonize other spots, areas and neighbourhoods of the urban centres due of their dimensions and adaptability considering the specific occasion.

In a third example – the *Superilles*<sup>5</sup> in Barcelona, a program by the City Governance – the urban morphology of the Cerdà Plan, already works as a natural framework for new possibilities. Superilles Pilot re-sets up new collective spaces inside its structure, working on the mobility system of the city and on the street redefinition thanks to the collaboration between governance, architects and people. The process uses instruments online and offline in the definition of the urban uses of the city spaces. Recognizing

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4 – Freezones is a program that the TUDelft starts in 2014. The areas of the program are simply marked on the ground: students and academic staff can reserve a spot for a specific event or activity using the university web site. Freezones is part of the project for a Living Campus that inspires and facilitates encounters. Thanks to a series of operations, the University Campus is transformed into a place where people can have a larger pattern of activities to do together, not only the ones related to work or study. For detailed information: <https://www.freezone weblog.tudelft.nl/freezonesoncampus/> (January 2018).

5 – It is a program set up by the City of Barcelona for the four-year period 2016-2019. The program (in Catal: “*Omplim de vida els carrers. La implantació de les Superilles a Barcelona*”) aims to transform the urban space and improve the city liveability starting from the regeneration of urban units (*Superilles*). The *Superilles* program bases its principles of interventions on the previous project for the period 2011-2015, the Plan for the Urban Mobility (2013 -2018), the Greenery and Biodiversity Plan and the Barcelona Climate Plan. Source: <http://www.ajuntament.barcelona.cat/superilles/ca/> (January 2018).

and using pilot space in the urban tissue represents a legalized urban hacking that can put in relation the reasons of space and design together with the interests of people, city and investors. The regenerated spaces are located in specific spots but works as a system that can transform globally the urban environment, acting locally.

This kind of approaches, that we can study through the examples, are not rigid instruments linked to a inflexible vision of the city regulation, but – in a soft way – manage the complexity and the contradictions that are more and more typical considering the need of contemporary city spaces. We could consider them as light, lean, smart policies for their ability to embrace bottom-up reasons and taking advantage from new digital tools in order to be faster and appropriate according to specific situations. These policies have the capability to be facilitators for the urban environment. They highlight possibilities of transformation, actable just prefiguring pattern of relationship, networks, specific problems to solve, indicators etc.

## Conclusion

All the situations described represent *urban activators* for the city that should be properly managed by urban policies. The term *activator* is used because they represent just a starting point for a longer process to increase step by step. These examples need an open way to organize their operating principles and, at the same time, need lighter and smarter policies related to their flexible nature. Considering the fact that the space uses are mutable during the time, it is important to intervene with an open-ended approach that can regulate the process in a not deterministic way. We should consider that this kind of projects aren't a fixed solution – especially in their first phase – but only one possibility: the most proper for the city and the people needs in a specific period of time. It is the constant relation and test of the results that define their adequacy. In this spectrum, the urban policies have an important role because mediate and moderate the relationship between all the actors involved. This is a very delicate and precise responsibility that only an instrument that come from the governance of the city can actuate and manage.

Codifying proper urban policies for these kind of urban projects means to support design proposals more related to the everyday city experience. These operations can improve the sense of identity, appropriation and common sense of the space by the inhabitants. This is possible because they take into consideration a series of aspects that just the citizens can know, giving a limit to possible failures. It is a possible way to includes people instances as part of the design brief to develop. Moreover, it is the





set of rules that can indicate the right markers to take into considerations. Mobility, open green areas, services, new digital opportunities etc. are just some general themes and indicators to consider according to local necessities. It is the policy that establishes the pattern of topics starting from good practices and citizens opinions, leaving open the possibility to add new alternatives and propositions.

At the same time, setting up a series of indicators, that define goals and benchmarks related to business and local market aspects, can define a clear vision of the context from an economic point of view. According to that, potential investors could take into account the opportunity to start a project in a specific urban area. In this way, these light policies can bring the proposal in line with the stakeholders interests and the market needs, gathering – in an easier way – all the right actors seated at the table. Moreover, the process becomes faster thanks to the new digital possibilities. Digital tools are constantly present in these experiences because of their capability to organize and put in relation great quantity of information, data and people. This is something that should be more and more used as a tool to manage and spread the policies values. Many problems could be prevented and many opportunities could be clearer thanks to this new filter. The best practices show that also a good communication of the chances has an important role to incentivize this kind of urban transformations and the web is a good medium to reach this goal.

In the end and according with this vision, the future of the city appears more shared, collective and collaborative between all the actors involved, but at the same time not confused and chaotic: a way to take advantage from the global participation that the instruments of contemporary society can give us, if they are used in a virtuous way.

**“The urban issue is certainly a relevant research topic. It is, for us, the dimension in which the concept of politics is changing, where we call upon social actors to redefine the codes of a new citizenship pact and where the peoples are encouraged to change their point of view in a perspective oriented toward new participation practices, determined also by digital transformation”**

**(Massimiliano Tarantino)**

## Interview to Massimiliano Tarantino Feltrinelli Foundation

Gianfranco Orsenigo, Massimo Bruto Randone

Feltrinelli Foundation, established by Giangiacomo Feltrinelli in 1949, is an institution that develops several research activities aimed at the definition of different futures, thanks to its documented heritage. With the development of the project located in viale Pasubio in Milan, the Foundation earns a chance to be a platform for the debate among all the territorial stakeholders involved in the transformation about some relevant contemporary issues, so that it can become a network made of contacts, influences and listening, used as a tool for the construction of possible futures. Thanks to the adoption of this networking policy, Feltrinelli Foundation becomes a relevant player for the city of Milan and other institutions. The following are questions for Massimiliano Tarantino regarding our research about the *Ecology of Policy*.

**In 2011 Feltrinelli Foundation started the construction of a new headquarter. This decision evidences how the relationship with the city changed and demonstrates an increased interest in the *urban issue*. Can you describe the Foundation as an urban policies actor?**

With the approval of the project in via Pasubio a profound rethinking of the Foundation has been launched: from an institution dedicated to the preservation of documentary historical heritage to the place where to experience the dimension of active citizenship. In this change Foundation is not the institution that states what actors, called upon to update the rules of the citizenship pact, have to know, but rather it is the medium between them and the enhancement of their expertise. Without the new headquarter this new way of thinking could not have been started.

When the design of the building was entrusted to Herzog & De Meuron architecture firm, two principles were also indicated, that were intended to structure the intervention: Foundation as a complex cultural system; the system as an osmotic structure in the relationship with the city. This building allows to speak to and include a wider audience, quantitatively and qualitatively different. It involves a broader and more generic public dimension, previously left out, as well as political institutions, the tertiary sector and companies.

With this operation, we also try to make research sustainable: to place ourselves on the market of thought and of the politics of thought, reshaping the Foundation as a relevant actor for the cultural offer within the macro-context in which it is inserted; to build its future focusing on the theme of social transformations as a crucial matter for the citizens, the politics, the third system and even for companies.

The urban issue is certainly a relevant research topic. It is, for us, the dimension in which the concept of politics is changing, where we call upon social actors to redefine the codes of a new citizenship pact and where the peoples are encouraged to change their point of view in a perspective oriented toward new participation practices, determined also by digital transformation.

**You described Feltrinelli Foundation as an activator and medium between different social urban actors. How does the Foundation work in the contexts in which it is involved? What is your idea of social involvement policy?**

I like to say that we conduct our policy through contents and the payoff of the next few years is the *future to share*. The focus trajectories on which we are researching should make us react to the inescapability of inequalities. The key-factor is that Feltrinelli Foundation is an innovative publisher that gives to itself and its researchers the role of medium among all the skills that collaborate around the same table, positioning itself as the enabler of what emerges from this interaction. The task of the Foundation is: to set priorities; to identify the social actors involved; to ensure that the debate produces contents and generates awareness and improvement for the whole group. The Foundation activates its resources and those find upon the territory, following a supply chain starting from its own patrimony. It provides to conduct research on the specific themes of its heritage, social sciences, and allows the production of different kind of outputs: editorial initiatives together with dissemination and teaching; all

enables the communicative initiatives. What has been said so far aims at an advocacy project that supports either the updating of policy making or private companies that can recognize the Foundation as a research center.

**Fondazione Feltrinelli has been a relevant stakeholder in the EXPO 2015 process, in its policy that focusing on the territorial repercussions and its legacy. What have we learned, as a city and as a country system?**

The EXPO2015 experience marked a change in the relationship between the different players. The interaction between different interest cores, aimed at the achievement of the general goal of EXPO, established a best practice in use. The involved realities are still pursuing this praxis with a typical *milanese pragmatism* that makes economic, social and cultural resources of the territory collaborate, overcoming specific interests.

About the *Milan Charter*, the legacy of EXPO2015, we mediated and systematized the skills, knowledge, best practices and goals of the different players taken to table by the government. We worked on the *overlapping consensus*, building a meaning of what was in common among all the candidate instances, without ignoring each cultural specificity. We tried to make common issues emerge, keeping in mind the differences. The following attempt was to translate the full set of shared ideas into a universal language that could rise common social awareness. The Chart is a powerful tool to focus the attention of the people to the issue and to encourage politics on the food policy, the relations between citizens, territorial and industrial needs.

In accordance to the experience gained so far, I can say that the duty of *good politics* is to set the goals to be gained and through the tools of the policy to encourage virtuous processes to achieve the targets, respecting and empowering the social actors who guide the process, without binding contents and paths.



SPACE

IDENTITY

POLICY

PROGRAM





## Creative Strategies for Augmented Cities

Maurizio Carta

### The Augmented City: A paradigm shift

By 2050, the world's urban population is expected to nearly double, making urbanisation one of the most transformative trends and asking urbanism to give more innovative and effective solutions. Local populations and migrants, social and cultural interactions, environmental impacts and economic activities are increasingly concentrated in cities, and this poses massive sustainability challenges in terms of reimagining how to plan and manage housing, infrastructures, basic services, food security, health, education, decent jobs, safety and natural resources, among others. We do not have enough time to wait for the solutions, because the cities of the future must be built on the actual cities, bringing them in a different present more sustainable, creative, sensible and intelligent.

We need an urban paradigm shift: the Augmented City, as a spatial/cultural/social/economic platform for enhancing our contemporary life, individual and collective, informal and institutional, expanding the urban space generated by the effects of innovation (Carta 2017c). The Augmented City redefines dogmas of urbanism that we often thought of being more static and rule-based, recovering its prospective, incremental, responsive and creative approach. One the main challenges of the Augmented City is to be more creative, improving the cultural dimension through the integrated use of culture, communication and cooperation as resources for an active city that can generate new forms and pattern able to stimulate the human creativity and able to stimulate a different growth based on identity, quality and reputation.

But Urban creativity is a hard challenge! It does not need rules or models, but adaptive protocols applicable in different local contexts, able to mount resources, capacity building and creative environments. The planning effort for the creative city requires not limiting to the identification of the general features of the creative milieu (Florida and Tinagli 2004) or the identification of operational universal tools (Landry 2007). It challenges us to find local features that could provide good practices to be turned into methodologies or components to forge new urban and human regeneration tools, based on the cultural armature and the engagement of citizens. Urban areas undergoing transformation and rural land in transition can catch up and implement the new architectural and social quality and livability of public spaces provided they aspire to overcome the creative single-cluster logic promoting a more effective creative eco-system – a true creative land – able to connect and extend the influence of the districts in a polycentric and reticular view.

Cities should rethink existing activities and identities (capitals and talents) through an urban/human regeneration, made by space rehabilitation, social innovation, rural development and districtualization strategies involving economic, social and infrastructure initiatives to implement innovative projects fueled by the soft economy (Chapain 2010) based on spatial quality, local excellence and the wide cultural armature of the territory. The current phase, focusing on tangible anti-crisis policies requires that creative investments are even more effective, losing too intangible or purely financial features to work within the local socio-economic context, hence the global one. Economy and urban policies can use the swing power of the creative city to emerge from the quagmire of the crisis, plus the added value of the creativity, which optimises acceleration to be used as cultural growth machine given its ability to simultaneously influencing the overall size of the networks and the territorial local dimension, the tangible dimension of urban regeneration, the architectural heritage enhancement and the intangible dimension of cultural activities promotion and cultural heritage valorization.

We live in a Creative Land composed by generative cities, a wide palimpsest of innovation labs, as experimented by several worldwide networks supporting what's variously termed social enterprise, community interest companies, impact economy, organizations that aim to create positive social impact through enterprise. By connecting members, co-working places, talent gardens, creative incubators, rural communities the Creative Land aims to create collaborative relationships between talented people who can turn thoughts into action when dealing with the social, cultural



Fonte dei dati: Twitter Inc. - API; Facebook Inc. - API; Fourquare Inc. - API;



Talenti con forte relazione di livello urbano  
Gruppi di talenti con media relazione di livello urbano  
Polo di talenti con propensione alla integrazione periprofessionale  
Con spiccate di integrazione urbana





and environmental issues of today. In the creative-based transition towards a permanent interaction among information, innovation, education and research, also the university-city ecosystem must be enforced for acting as a more open, dialogic and connected source and as a power for urban regeneration, activating creativity and innovation, sharing knowledge and intelligence and educating to sustainable development. Building creative communities is one of the main topic of the new strategic agendas of universities for synchronising the development of the campuses with that of the cities in a more effective creative metabolism.

### Mapping the Creative Land genome

Culture could be the most effective sustainable dimension of development (Unesco 2015) if it is able to deeply interact with other dimensions, constituting their fertile base for developing. In this generative vision, creativity is an enabling device for culture-based sustainable development, and it can act as an “upgrader” for cities and communities in the Neo-Anthropocene, characterised by a more sensible, intelligent and resilient action of people on planet.

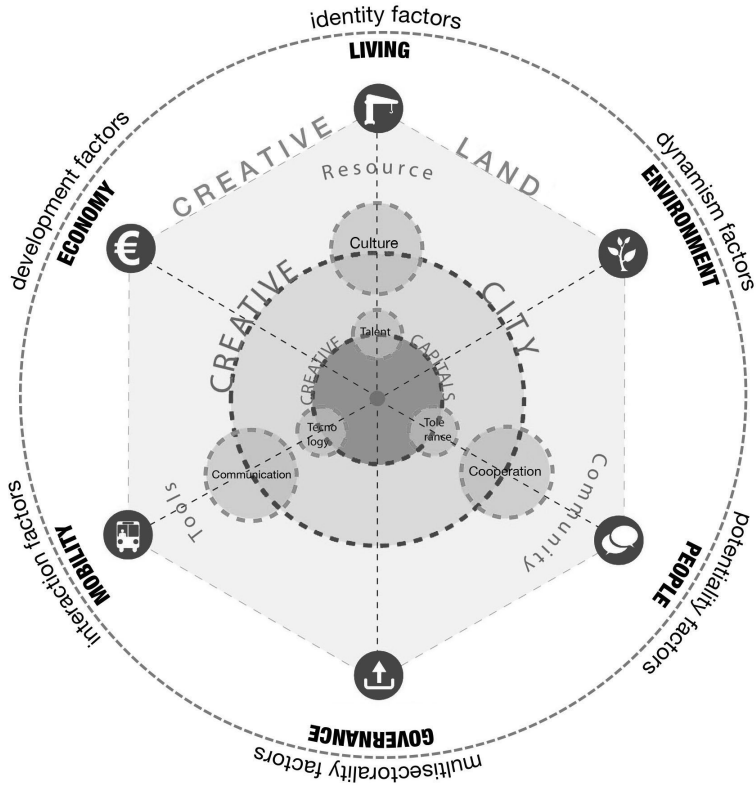
In the Neo-Anthropocene creativity is one of the most important component of the new urban genome, defining its urban/human identity. The creative genome needs a fertile ecosystem – not just as an environment – for developing a powerful human settlement able to act as a generator of new cultural, social, economic and, above all, spatial relationships. For testing the relevance of creativity in the strategic choices of Palermo, we edited a “Map of Talents, Creativity and Innovation”, identifying all the places dedicated to creativity and innovation in order to understand the logic of the settlements of new fab city’s makers. The map is useful to identify the existence of emergent creative clusters but especially, in our proactive vision, is useful to guide future planning decisions towards the creation of a spatial ecosystem that facilitate the rise, development and profitability of the city of innovative production (tangible and intangible) (Carta 2017a).

We live in a creative land and we have to map its genome for understanding not only the components, but the opportunities and the operational actions. As showed in the Creative Land diagram the creative land genome combines and interfaces the traditional creative capitals (*talent, technology* and *tolerance*) with creative chromosomes (Carta 2006) and their smart city’s accelerators for contributing to sustainable development main tasks. The first interface agent is *Culture*, the territorial identity, steeped in history yet also extending into the future contribute. Tangible

and intangible culture is the most distinctive and competitive urban/rural resource, its identity and diversity as products of its history. Because the talent of a community could generate value, it must be submerged in the virtuous circle of the culture economy, the geography of experience, the design of quality. Culture, therefore, plays a part in the field of *Resources*, enabling cities to become more creative in the sustainable development sectors of *living*, *economy* and *environment*.

The second generative factor of creative genome is *Communication*, namely the ability of a city to inform, divulge information and involve in real time its citizens and multitude of users, using all kind of technology and making possible interventions aimed at cutting down congestion and deterioration: a city which makes effective use of innovation technology is, indeed, also one which cuts down on travelling, keeps a check on pollution and improves the way we work, delocalizing services and repositioning their centrality. Communication provides the setting of Tools for development acceleration in the fields of *economy*, *mobility* and *governance*. And finally, the third creative factor is *Cooperation*, because, in global and multicultural cities, tolerance implies not merely the acceptance of other cultures and ethnic groups which remain at the margins of mainstream city life. The challenge faced by creative/generative land lies instead in the explicit collaboration among diversities, through cooperation among all users, between city centres and suburbs, between urban and rural functions. The creative land is not merely more open, multicultural and multiethnic, but it must be capable of mobilizing its diverse component parts in the pursuit of a plan for the future. Cooperation, therefore, redefines the *Community*, assigning it new roles and clearer objectives for empowering smarter people relationships with *governance* and *environment*.

We may identify three main stages of urban policies enabling to activate the creative ecosystems by connecting polycentric clusters, spreading the district effects and reducing the negative effect of the creative polarisation (Carta 2014). First, an effective urban policy must strengthen the competitiveness of the districts by adopting leverage strategies (identity, cultural resources, city branding) to be integrated with the metropolitan dimension increasing both its extension and scope, hence its power. Mobility and communication infrastructures shall therefore be strengthened, especially focusing on the large transnational networks (ports and airports), and the development of provision services for industries, especially high-added value innovative services promoting networking. The importance of interventions aimed at extending and strengthening human capital, skills and expertise available shall not be





neglected, that focus on education and research as well as promoting interaction between actors within clusters and inter-cluster, including intermediary parties (agencies, joint ventures, advisor, etc.). Likewise, tax and financial incentives acting as a link with strong clusters in the sphere of creativity are of paramount importance, just as much as promoting new latent activities starting from the social capital in the less central areas.

The second stage relates to policies for the spreading of creative clusters effects in the entire human settlement within an ecosystem perspective. These are mainly aimed at reducing the environmental and energy impact, providing stimulus for the social accountability of established industries, by including rules for encouraging financial compensation of the fees for planning permission and the negotiated reallocation of part of the profits for urban quality interventions. A more aware territorial planning project must lead and settle the activities and businesses within the creative ecosystem so as to reassess the generated flows, and above all to avoid possible congestion risks owing to new land and services demands.

Transferring the results of a successful creative cluster ought to focus on the overall image of the city, leveraging the brand for the purpose of strengthening credibility and the resulting attractiveness of investments, people and users, including flagship project as accreditation (Bilbao has set the standard in this sense). Naturally, how some of the best known urban projects will be redefined is unknown yet, because of the global economic crisis, but there is no doubt that in times of infrastructural and construction anti-crisis measures, a clear, comprehensive and consistent strategy facilitates the allocation of public resources in projects where a positive private business case already exists, retaining initial investments (Nantes, Marseille and Hamburg projects provide some empirical evidence).

Urban creativity is definitely exit from its intangible sector entering in urban sustainability policies, not only by affirming principles but demonstrating practices. The 116 cities of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network call for placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of urban development in support of economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability, and actively cooperating at the international level. The creative-based cities thus work at both the local and international levels, developing partnerships involving the public and private sectors, as well as civil society, and sharing best practices towards: strengthening the creation, production, distribution and dissemination of cultural activities, goods and services; developing hubs of creativity and innovation and broadening opportunities for creators and professionals



in the cultural sector; improving access to and participation in cultural life, in particular for marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals. And, overall, the cities must integrate culture and creativity into their sustainable development plans and processes.

The challenges faced by the creative cities include the need to transform derelict areas for contemporary urban uses, to enhance the inclusion of socially-marginalized groups, and to improve the dynamics and diversity of their urban economies. Creative cities are tackling these challenges, among others in a holistic approach, by instigating activities linked to their respective creative field and fully capitalizing on their creative assets as a basis for building sustainable, inclusive and balanced development in economic, cultural, environmental and social terms. Solutions include built interventions in the urban fabric, the organization of urban festivals and events fostering cultural participation, reinforcing the capacities of cultural professionals, training and supporting new talents, investigating new forms of creation and the adoption of policies and measures that support an enabling environment for local creative industries. Thus, by focusing their actions on human capital and local know-how, creative cities not only reinforce the sense of identity and pride of their inhabitants, but also their capacity to generate new values, sources of income and social cohesion.

Cities based on creativity are hubs of innovation and breeding grounds for the development of new strategies, policies and initiatives aimed at making culture and creativity a driving force for sustainable development and urban regeneration, helping to increase opportunities for a broader range of communities, while contributing to more inclusive social patterns and urban economies.

In this way, creative cities respond to major local challenges such as the economic crisis, environmental degradation, demographic growth and social tensions, and can exchange experiences and best practices at the international level. They demonstrate that the creative assets play a vital role in sustaining local economies and in creating new economic opportunities. They help improve access to and participation in cultural life, as well as the enjoyment of cultural goods and services, particularly among marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals. Moreover, the UNESCO Creative Cities offers exceptional opportunities for cities to draw on peer learning processes and collaborative projects at the regional and international levels in order to foster the creativity inside the planning and management structure.

As for the third stage, it encompasses actions to reduce the negative effects of a creative cluster, either within the property market realm to contrast gentrification, which would level out the cultural and generational diversity, thus flattening creativity through compensation policies (rent control, reserve allowances for social housing, tax benefits for young couples etc.). Even the improvement of urban mobility through infrastructure planning and the promotion of intermodality and the proper management of public transport systems significantly contribute to avoid the burden of congestion and land use, other than strengthening the ecosystem view.

### **Creativity as social urban catalyst**

The creative city could be seen as a spatial network of social catalysts. “Cities are living organisms: if they are not cultivated in the right way, they wither and die. The architecture has the power to place individuals in a community and to revive the forgotten corners of our urban fabric; communities use it to plant a flag and reunite” (Kushner 2015, 23), says Marc Kushner, founder of the online platform Architizer. In our creative-based vision social catalysts can be art galleries, youth centres, education buildings, creative incubators, shared spaces, libraries or museums: powerful urban tools to encourage the responsible action of the social body. Main challenge for advanced urbanism must be plan the urban rooting of these social catalysts and design the connection with other networks that shape the city.

Focusing on the social capital is essential not only regards improving the skills of the labour market, but by promoting empowerment, thus encouraging self-employment and association networks, in order to facilitate the transition towards the creative economy. The intense and strong ties between institutional actors and stakeholders involved in the creative ecosystem is a critical success factor, hence the need of the urban planners to encourage the emerging of such ties in terms of urban plans, projects, norms and conditions.

In this sense, the presence of places of proximity and relationship (urban center and living lab, community centres and incubators, co-housing and co-working) and the localisation of cultural, sport or leisure services act as social catalyst and it is an important prerequisite for strengthening the social capital among the different actors involved in the ecosystem.

It is in Southern Italy that we assist at a peculiar alliance between historical heritage and creative innovation, between identities and prospectives, producing several experiments of creative-based urban regeneration oriented to catalyse new social capital. The *Unmonastery Project* of Matera

is a community of young digital natives that share their skills with the community acting for its digital empowerment. The *Re-action City Project* and other projects by *Pensando Meridiano* in Reggio Calabria act as citizenship activator recycling disused areas, infrastructures and landscape for realising new community spaces. The knowledge atelier *ex Fadda* in Puglia is a public space for participation, creativity and social innovation with a strong orientation to economic self-sustainability. In the art-based regeneration initiative by *Periferica* in Mazara del Vallo a community of young urban professional share their skills with children, aged person and immigrants for building a new creative and multicultural community able to revitalise the declining historical centres of the towns.

The best Italian experiment ongoing of creative social catalyst – with an international reputation – is the FARM Cultural Park in Favara, a little town just 8 km from Agrigento's Unesco Archaeological Park “Valley of the Temples”, but seven years ago it had never featured on any tourist map. Until now. Today FARM acts powerfully as a tornado in the current debate about how to make small communities survive global changes and economic crisis, and how to identify unused resources to make them an empowering instrument of sustainable growth and social innovation. The project was born in 2010 from the desire, passion and ability of the patron of the arts Andrea Bartoli (cultural agitator he says of himself) and his wife Florinda, who recycled an abandoned district turning it into a worldwide cultural centre devoted to contemporary arts, architecture, design and social innovation. The creative district, called *Sette Cortili* (Seven Courtyards), includes a breakthrough contemporary art museum, a residence for artists from around the world, an innovation-oriented co-working space, a space dedicated to an innovative School of Architecture for Children, a leisure garden – called “riad” as tribute at the Moroccan tradition – with a high stars hotel suite for art travelers, a bookshop, a concept store and several ethnic food spaces that mix Mediterranean culinary traditions. Exteriors of buildings are used as canvases for huge paintings and sculptures by young artists such as Fabio Melosu, Frabianco, Sara Fratini, Make and Analogique, courtyards feature permanent or temporary installations. “FARM is a museum of people”, says Andrea Bartoli to underline the community meaning of the successful experiment: not a cold fusion of art and city – like a lot of other gentrification-oriented practices – but a hot alliance among local community, regeneration space, private initiative, global art networks, creativity and identity.

The initiative, at its seventh year, has contributed to regenerate the entire old town of Favara with numerous shared urban design initiatives to

return it to citizens and connect it with European counterparts through international cultural and tourism networks. Today the great ruin of the Cafisi Palace, ex scythes factory and then asylum in the center of town is reopened and made available by the young artists of Rudere Project, hosting exhibitions, literary events and temporary installations pending the launch of its complete restoration as part of a new interest of investors for Favara's real estate. Last FARM's challenge will be the realization within five years, only by crowdfunding, of the first Children's Museum, restoring an old building near the district as a young empowerment machine for educating and nurturing a new "FARM generation" of creatives, innovators and changemakers, from South of the world to act in global arena. FARM is one of the best experiment of Cityforming Protocol, because it has refused a masterplan approach, impossible to realize in that context, preferring a project-based incremental approach timed by colonisation, consolidation and development phases. In its first seven years FARM Cultural Park has acted as a creative colony for forming an adequate ecosystem and a sufficient cultural atmosphere for farming a true community of visionaries and innovators, designer and artisans, dreamers and entrepreneurs able to consolidate the initial local experiment for further development and propagation to entire town.

SOU, the School of Architecture for Children is the new ambitious project of Farm Cultural Park: educational activities after school, related to urban planning, architecture and the environment, community building, but also to art, design, urban agriculture and nutritional education will involve children, young people and their parents. The mission of SOU is to stimulate reflection, planning and action for the betterment of society. Promoting education in the host values, participation, tolerance and solidarity, generosity and social commitment. The effect was the reactivation of the entire cultural, social and economic system of Favara through a new attractiveness of the small Sicilian town for the worldwide creative class and through emulation by other initiatives that feed the brand of FARM: cultural centers, art exhibition spaces, urban agriculture, urban center.

FARM is not only an effective renewal of houses, public spaces and streets that form the seven courtyards, but it is the activation of a true creative ecosystem that acts both physically and on the social and economic development: many people from Favara and its environments got involved, young and old, creating job and volunteer opportunities for many in the community.

Creative city and identity of places, experience economy and quality of life, cultural hubs and armatures, strategic planning and efficient good



governance are not only new keywords to drive the urban development, but integrated tools aimed at reactivating the urban organism re-encoding its cultural DNA, bringing practical resources and innovative procedures back in the game of the city development.

### **A new creative urban agenda**

Culture is more than the tangible part of sustainable development through the heritage or the intangible part through the creativity, but it is the “operative system” of the sustainable development: the collective intelligence that puts in connection tangible heritage and intangible identities, cultural infrastructures and creative economies, conservation of the historical sites and urban innovation. As already mentioned this operative system for being powerful and context-oriented must be opensource, built by the several “coders” that act in the cultural ecosystem following a collective urban agenda for creative cities and communities.

So, an effective creative urban agenda asks for practical actions, all grounded in local contexts and formulated and implemented through a collaborative approach, and a panel of initiatives that could act as the beta testers of the new creative-driven paradigm of sustainable development. We need five operative tools that could be implemented and tested for using culture and creativity as active tools in sustainable urban regeneration:

1. *Creative Labs*: integrated urban regeneration programs based on the development and consolidation of creative districts as living labs and incubators of ideas, culture, production and social development within which integrate and enhance public demand and decision-making, talents, resources' consumption reduction, energy efficiency and incentives with the opportunities for private entrepreneurship.
2. *Covenant of creativity*: drawing up of creative regeneration agreements or action plans formulated in highly participative ways in support of environmental and social sustainability, accompanied by monitoring benchmarks based on parameters related to the metabolism of buildings and public spaces, mobility, the waste cycle and the digital infrastructure. The value of culture and creativity for generating income and jobs has been largely proven. What should be measured first now is what is the cost of not valuing culture and creativity in urban planning.
3. *Creative capacity building*: activation of project-oriented, economic-driven and management-based local agencies or steering committees to enhance the creative cooperation at the city level contributing to foster the development

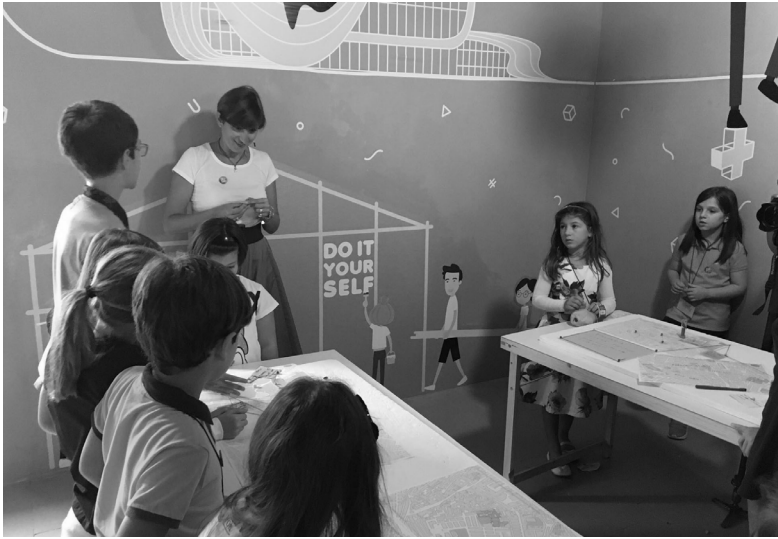
of public-private-civil society partnerships and to attract investments, connected to a responsible simplification and to a greater effectiveness of the administration in the field of culture and creativity policies.

4. *Convergence and cross protocols*: developing positive convergences between the different creative sectors but also between them and the other sectors of the economy following integrated and transversal approaches and operative protocols based on exploration, co-creation, experimentation and evaluation. Creative urban policies have to encourage spill-overs and spin-offs and cross discipline collaboration.

5. *Creative dividend*: designing innovative tools for the creative city governance through the promotion of new culture-based frameworks for spreading the creativity's impact in everyday life. The creative dividend, through the six factors drawn in the external circle of the Creative Land diagram (identity, dynamism, potentiality, multisectoral, interaction and development), acts on quality of life and spatial equalization, on environmental active protection, on people empowerment and social innovation, on multilevel governance and management incentives, on sustainable mobility, and on taxes and fiscal leverage. The structural interaction of six factors of creative dividend is able to enhance the social return on investment in culture and creativity and the spread of positive effects and effective impacts. The ethical dimension of culture and creativity needs a creativity dividend as an active instrument to improve the values' generation for reduce inequality and differences. We are moving from the creative economy to creativity in the economy as creativity is a catalyst leading to new business models in every sector, building notably in the opportunities offered by the alliance between digital technologies and social innovation.

The creative dividend must become an active part of the new rights to city and a money in the new marketplace of cultural capitalism. But, creativity on its own does not stand a chance for the cities. It is a contextual practice, one that needs spatial relations, efficient planning and responsible community. It asks for collaborative planning, sharing of ideas and active participation of the citizens. The creative dividend is the booster of the raising cultural welfare, because new perspectives are opening up for reshaping cultural policies with strategic and multidisciplinary alliances in favour of urban welfare. In the Creative Land the players in the cultural processes will have no option but to reorientate themselves towards a new alliance between institutional competences and social challenges. For the first time at the global level, the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030 (United Nations 2017) acknowledges the key role of





culture, creativity and cultural diversity to solving sustainable development challenges. It highlighted the dual nature of cultural activities, goods and services: they have both an economic and a cultural dimension, providing jobs and revenues, driving innovation and sustainable economic growth, and at the same time conveying identities and values, fostering social inclusion and sense of belonging. We need to reshape cultural policies to redefine the role of culture and creativity in sustainable development (Unesco, 2015), but even more we must witness the multiple advantages of this fertile alliance, as a force for both social and economic sustainability, as a driver to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms.

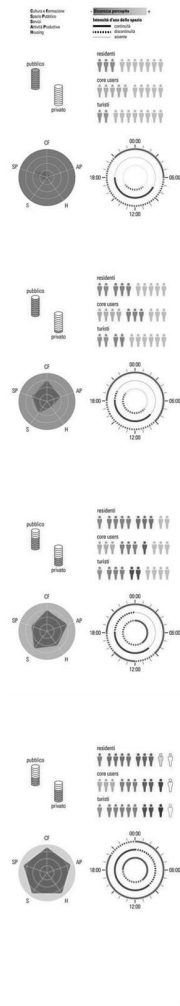
The components of the creative urban agenda were used in 2016 in Open Taranto Competition for the regeneration of “*Città Vecchia*” (the historic district). “*Taranto respira*” (Taranto breathes) was the proposal by Mario Cucinella Architects, Maurizio Carta, Patrizia Di Monte, Luigi Oliva, Studio De Vita & Schulze Architetti, Tms Engineering Srl, and others that won the special mention “for public involvement in the process of transformation and for establishing a solid incremental process for its implementation”.<sup>1</sup> Our project is implemented through three incremental

1– From the commission’s results of the Open Taranto Competition for the regeneration of “*Città Vecchia*”.

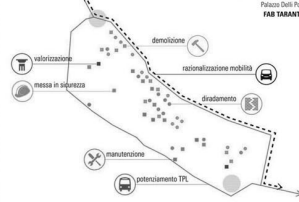


# CITYFORMING TARANTO

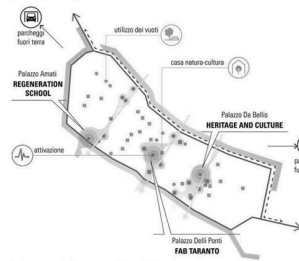
incremental and adaptive strategies



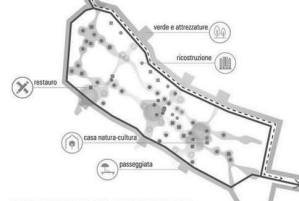
## FORMATTING public policies



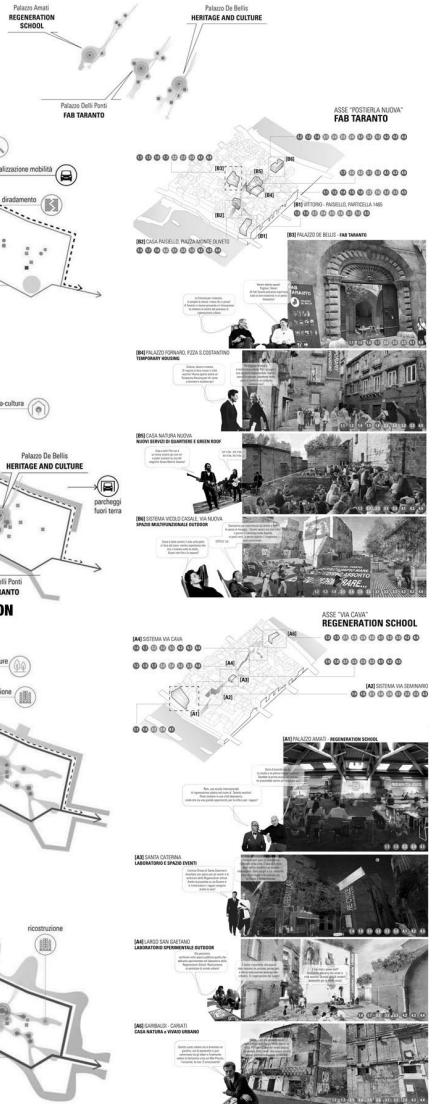
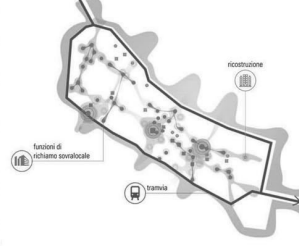
## CREATIVE COLONISATION participating to action

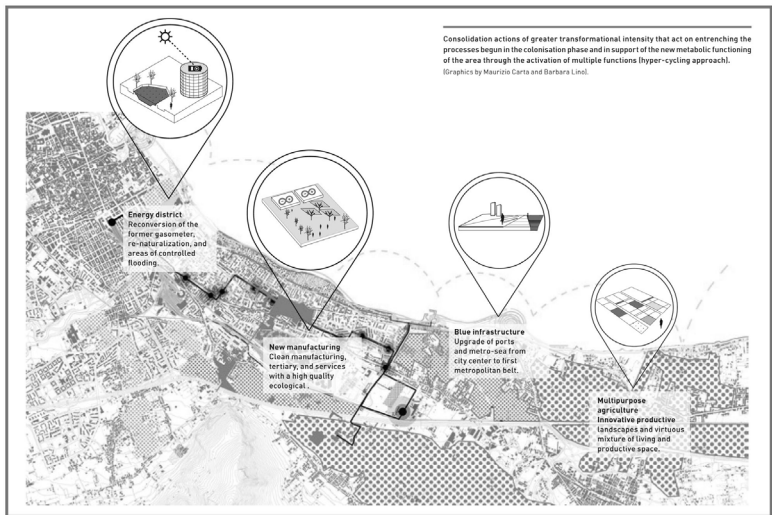
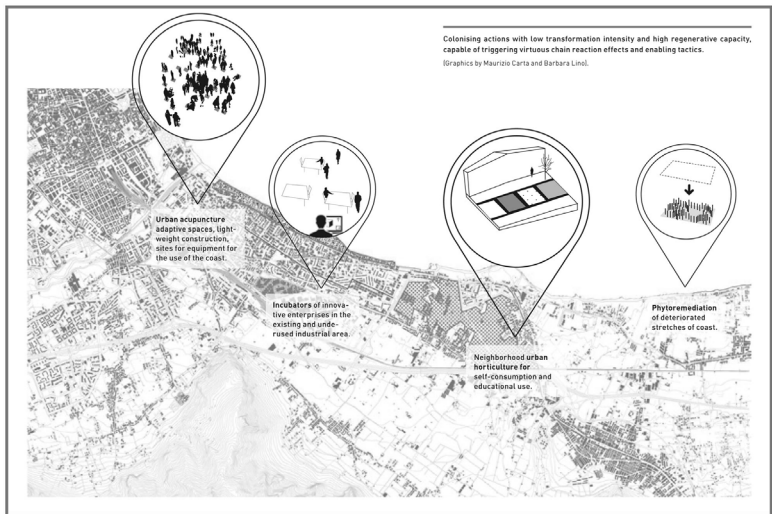


## COLLABORATIVE CONSOLIDATION promoting and rooting



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT evolution and growth





phases, timed, which allowed to define an action program self-sustainable, low cost and with intensive effects. Each action creates the necessary conditions for the implementation of the next, in a real own metabolic process that limits the use of considerable external resources.

Another ongoing experiment of creative labs is represented by Palermo South Coast regeneration (Carta 2017b), where a collaboration between the Department of Architecture of the University of Palermo and the Palermo Municipality drew up a strategic and circular design approach for reactivating the cultural, social and productive metabolism of the southern waterfront, stimulating the rising of several creative colonies able to root themselves connecting with local resources and social dynamism of the area.

So, a creative-oriented urban agenda will bring about a positive transformation of the entire sphere of the arts, design, culture, a deep change in the mechanisms of price formation and distribution, a coming together of cultural communities, development of more refined tastes and an improvement in the material situation of the creative class. The city enhanced by creativity will make it possible to co-ordinate cultural initiatives targeted at territorially dispersed groups of consumers with demand and will be reshaping the demand itself. It will help to enhance and spread cultural activities in order to make knowledge, cooperation, social innovation and to reactivate a productive metabolism.



## **A Multipurpose Co-Designed Experience of the City The Use of the Space in the Urban Environment**

**Federica Marchetti**

In the traditional design, the program for an urban or architecture project is established considering the needs of the client – public or private – and the economic/marketing reasons. Generally, the program is fixed and stable according with the fact that “temporary activities are generally considered to signify a time of crisis or a failure to develop” (Bishop and William 2012, 19). At the same time our society is more and more fluid according with the sociological concept of “liquid modernity” devoted to Bauman. So, it seems very difficult to interpret, with a permanent use of the city space, the actual mutable needs of the people.

If we look at the past, and we consider the destination of the land use, during the last century we are passed from zoning to mixed use but the tendencies for program of new urban developments is always influenced by the reasons of the economic market. In most of the cases, streets and squares are inhabited just by commercial uses in specific hours/days of the week. Moreover, people tend to do public activities in private spaces (gyms, sporting centres, malls). As we can see, the situation produces a failure in terms of people engagement in the use of public domain and in many public spaces of the city we find a lack in terms of identity. This phenomenon, described in the last century literature from Richard Sennet to Marc Augè reveals a kind of urban condition that does not allow and foster the interaction between inhabitants and the space of the city. The situation appears very far from citizens habits and desires, as Jane Jacobs already described in her urban studies during the Sixties, because, as she said: “cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody” (Jacobs 1961, 238).

At the same time, many abandoned places – open spaces or old buildings – that apparently are unattractive for the real estate market, can have an hidden value for the local communities. Starting the re-use of these spaces by people, they reorganize informal programs of activities and re-give them a new life according to different occasions. This kind of use is not fixed and stable, but it changes considering people needs, special events, shared activities etc.: in a certain way, it seems that temporary is becoming the rule and not the exception; moreover, it seems that is an interesting way to solve identity lack in the public domain. In many cases, all these processes are related to the new possibilities that the digital world offer us (online communities, social media, open source and crowd-funding platforms). The new tools help the relation between people, designers, municipalities, other stakeholders etc. and support bottom-up processes to revitalize the city space: “the digital city enables, in fact demands, a compendium of different forms to reflect the multiple ways it can be imagined and experienced” (Hawley, Clift and O’Brien 2016, 3).

It seems that, from the bottom, there is a new motivation to be part of the public space, have a deeply experiences of the city and contribute to define it: from the “insurgent public space” (Hou 2010, 2), rose as a guerrilla practice in response to the lack of urban space uses, to the legal ones according with the Municipality. From the so-called Pop-up city that “serve as encouraging platform for innovative and inspirational activities to flourish” (Beekmans and de Boer 2014, 16) to the experimental projects financed by important brands. In particular, these last examples can represent the good downside in the general idea that spaces imposed by commercial companies are always a bad answer for the urban environment (Grunfeld 2013, 214).

These experiences can support our reflections and can produce the key answers to the questions: could temporary uses being the essence of an urban program? How? What kind of actors can involve? These temporary condition is really temporary? It can be the starting point to test uses that sometimes could became permanent? And, moreover, which kind of city they can produce?

### **Informal programs**

The idea that our age was moving toward a society of experiences is rooted into the sixties and seventies period. In the work of Constant, we found the concept of the *Homo Ludens* as specified by Johan Huizinga expressed in his utopian city, New Babylon: “*Homo Ludens* himself will seek to transform, to recreate, those surroundings, that world, according to his new needs. The exploration and creation of the environment will

them happen to coincide because, in creating his domain to explore, *Homo Ludens* will apply himself to exploring his own creation” (Constant 1974, 62).

Actually, this phenomenon, from the frame of an anti-capitalist city, now is reality, it is not extraneous to market reasons and very influenced by the new digital culture because is linked to the concept of *prosumers*: city users “become active and themselves take part of the production” (Haydn and Temel 2006, 14). This term is strictly related to our modernity, coming from the mass use of internet and its large possibilities in terms of giving feedbacks and practicing customization. It seems that people want to find in the urban space what happens in the digital one: the possibility to say their own opinion and change the reality just with one click. In this case *Homo Ludens* and *Homo Oeconomicus*, conceptualized by Léon Walras, start to be more linked than ever, reviling all the contradictions of this relativist contemporary age of “experience economy” (Pine and Gilmore 1999, 1). Many informal programs that rise in our cities are linked with this change of mentality and the fact that, thanks to internet, the bottom-up organization of these process became easier. These cases start as a form of subculture and then becoming more and more attractive for all the city users.

An example of that is the Nomadic Community Garden in London. It is an informal operation by the local communities that started to re-use, in a productive way, an abandoned area of the city. People self-organize themselves in order to grow food, share knowledge, build relations. The activities are started with a form of auto-financing and using the crowd-funding platform *Spacehive*.<sup>1</sup> The initiative started from the idea to use the space for urban gardens, but in few time is become a space to every kind of leisure activities. The program is visible online, in their web and social pages; now is a Tripadvisor place to visit in London and the location where the annual Meeting of Style, an important festival for the street-art movement, takes place. This is an interesting example that can influence new relationship between people, city, municipality and other stakeholders. Indeed, this kind of processes could not just rise in informal ways if the players around the urban transformations try to set properly practices and include them in their strategies for the city. Actually, there are existing cases to analyze and take into consideration for the future development of this kind of approach.

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1 – “Spacehive - Crowd funding for local project” is a web portal that connect people with project ideas for the public spaces to councils, companies and grant-makers in order to find funds for their realization. Refer to: <https://www.spacehive.com/about> (January 2018).



## Co-designing the use of the space

The emerging informal situations inspire new form of “co-design”(Sanders and Stappers 2008, 6) and programs that helps the design process in the definition of the use of the space for abandoned urban fabrics or city spaces. This collective and creative way to find solutions for the city problems involves the inhabitants that become active players in the urban transformation process, since the beginning. People are not just the actors in a scenography built without them, but they can give starting inputs, useful for architects in the first phases of a project. This is a way to predict and/or take into action space uses related to the needs of the citizens. Collecting information and desires from the inhabitants means to have a new awareness of the place. It is not a new concept in the design field, but new technologies and media are increasing this possibility for the city requalification.

This is the case of *INstabile Portazza*,<sup>2</sup> when – at the end of 2014 and thanks to the local Social Street<sup>3</sup> online community – a group of citizens decide to regenerate an ex abandoned civic center in the Bologna periphery. After a co-design process (200 people and 30 organization involved) they define the use of the space for the future centre: the CCH (community creative hub). Another interesting example but for the urban space is *Nevicata14*,<sup>4</sup> a temporary project for Piazza Castello in Milan during the EXPO2015. The design process of the space involved the community thanks to its social media and web pages. This approach allowed the definitions of common rules for the people by the people. The creation of online groups around the problems of a specific site can bring new knowledge about what the city space needs and it can be used by architects and designers in the development of their project ideas. At the same time, it is also a way to establish shared conventions between citizens and other actors in order to increase the global awareness of the place, its potentiality, possible future utilizations and management of the activities. In general, creating new

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2 – *INStabile Portazza* is a bottom-up process that involve citizens, associations (Ass. Architetti di Strada Ass. Pro.Muovo), Coop Adriatica and the City of Bologna. Source: [www.instabileportazza.it](http://www.instabileportazza.it) (January 2018).

3 – Social Street is an online portal that support the creation of Facebook groups related to specific area of the cities. The aim is to create active community of citizens to debate and solve collective problems in the urban environment. Source: [www.socialstreet.it](http://www.socialstreet.it) (January 2018).

4 – *Nevicata14* is a project by the architecture practice Guidarini&Salvadeo and Interstellar Raccoons.





networks and relations makes more and more possible to find innovative or unexpected solution for the city environment. Moreover, these new opportunities can grow and change during the time with the certainty to have a direct feedback every time you need. This idea is present also in *El Campo de Cebada*,<sup>5</sup> an unused space in Madrid that, after a first temporary installation, is become a place to experiment new forms of collaboration between people, administration and designers in the definition of the space uses. Starting from weekly assemblies, the list of suggested activities was voted online in a specific website. This process allowed the co-definition of uses and the possibilities for architects to give effective answers in terms of spatial proposals.

All the urban processes described have the capability to structure a program very flexible and variegated according to occasions, user necessities, city requirements etc. It is the combination between the bottom-up proposals and top-down regulations that creates a virtuous short circuit to animate the urban space. In order to arrive at this point, it is important the definition of the different roles between citizens, designers, governance and investors. In particular, these operations could be more and more attractive for the markets, if the process become optimized and starts to have measurable results.

### **Intercepting the economic interest**

In the last years, this kind of approach is starting to attract investment from the private sector. Large companies decide to invest and promote temporary use of the space because are linked with program and activities that enrich their value as brands. The situation is interesting because is not just linked to commercial uses, as pop up stores related to their own business, but for leisure and cultural activities in themselves. Behind this situation there is a mix of new patronage and, moreover, the so called “native advertising” (Joel 2013): a form of promotion, born in the web, where the advertising experience follows the user experience in which it is placed. In fact, after the diffusion of internet and above all social networks, the traditional way to propose products and services became less and less. People started to use applications that block web advertisements and companies have understood that people – especially young generations – are annoyed by their usual ad. This phenomenon produced the rise of new forms of promotions that work more on the quality of the contents,

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5 – *El Campo de Cebada* (English: Barley Field) is a project set up by the Madrid City Council in 2011. Supporting the value of temporality, the experiment has host the installation by the architecture collective Zuloark.







they are less direct on the product characteristics and more linked to the global positive values that it can bring. These forms of advertising can be articles, editorial works for the web, video or photo projects etc., in general the arguments are related to cultural, artistic or social aspects according with the company business, but without a specific description of their products. Most of the time involves good designers, contents creators, artists, creative people etc. more or less famous according with the necessity. What should prevent to see this online trend into the offline world? In a certain way, we can look at this possibility as a positive way to intersect the interests of the private companies and the needs of some kind of city spaces. These operations could bring new shapes, uses and activities that the public sector can not support and now are not suitable for other kind of investors.

It is the case of BMW Guggenheim and the basketball courtyard in Paris by the fashion label Pigalle, the creative directors Ill Studio and the international brand Nike. The BMW Guggenheim Lab was a mobile laboratory about urban life started as a co-initiative of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and the BMW. From 2011 to 2014, the Lab travelled to New York, Berlin, and Mumbai. It is a physical installation that temporary fills urban voids<sup>6</sup> (Berlin, New York) or it is inserted in a city slum (Mumbai), but the lab is also an urban think tank, a community centre and a public gathering space to explore new ideas, experimentations, visions and projects for the city. Another example is the basketball courtyard Paris Duperré, by Pigalle and Nike, set in an urban gap of Paris in the 9th arrondissement. The project revitalizes an unused space of the city interlacing design, art, performance and sport. In this case it seems that the bottom-up rules, defined in the other one, are absorbed by administration and investors and the *Pop-up city* became top-down, but with more awareness in the goals to reach and in the people desires.

Bringing cultural and sports activities, events, shared uses in a new context where design and architecture are relevant, it is something that our cities needs. Intercepting the economic interests with a *quality oriented* approach could be a possible answer that mediate different necessities between all the actors involved in the process. Proper policies should be the guaranteeing for a correct predisposition of these relations in order to incentivize these operations and enrich them. Projects like the ones described could be considered as best practices toward this direction because of their capability

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6 – The installation in Berlin and New York were designed by the Japanese group Atelier Bow-Wow. For the project in Mumbai, Atelier Bow-Wow collaborated with the local practice SDM Architects.

to do not be simply commercial space supported by a sponsor, but urban places with a certain quality in terms of forms and activities that propose.

## Conclusion

This kind of programs reveal a city that it is already in action. It is a city that transforms itself thanks to a multidisciplinary approach, where architects, designers, municipalities, people and investors can have new relations between each other. In a book of 1999, the philosopher Pierre Lévy said that the biggest challenge for the architecture of the XXI century would have to leave behind the society of the spectacles to join a new era, using media to share knowledge (Lévy 1999, 31): the tools and examples described in this text, together with the new digital ability proposed, want to look at this chance.

Reaching this goal is possible thanks to the series of instruments: the engagement of the people and the co-design tool, the use of the web, the specific role of architects and designers in this kind of process, the investors that look at the urban space as a place where can interact with their customers through culture, arts, beauty and entertainments. The city produced is not perfect or ideal, but have the ability to be more adaptable considering inhabitants needs. It is a city that try to take the best from the new possibilities that contemporary age gives us.

In this general frame, the program becomes an element with a strong impact for the stages of the urban transformation. Thanks to its characteristics, it can evoke new possibilities for the space before the definition of a design strategy and has the ability to change according with the occasions proposed by bottom-up or top-down organizations. At the same time, the program is also a valid instrument to change the uses of the space during the time: a feature that meets the modern requirement of flexibility. This is a social and economic necessity that is reflected in the urban environment and a flexible program represents the right solution to manage it. This aspect has to be considered since the starting phase of the urban design strategy and, for this reason, it is important the collaboration between architects, designers, planners and all the actors that could be involved in the co-definition of the uses. Considering space and time as references, the activities are the flexible element in the program system that can satisfy the need of the inhabitants. Moreover, the results of this operations can be very relevant in terms of people engagement, liveability, place awareness, urban identity and *social innovation*. This approach allows a continuous improvement of the environment conditions because is an open process where the addition of new contributions to solve

new problems and necessities are always possible. According with this concept, the program reveals its *scalability*, that means: ability to grow and be replicable. “Emulation and inspiration also play a critical role in spreading an idea or a practice” (Murray, Caulier-Grice, and Mulgan 2010, 13), but usually it is not enough and other incentives arrive “through the provision of support and know-how from one to another in a more organic and adaptive kind of grow” (ibid.). In this way, the complexity of the contemporary urban environment can be seen from another point of view, where the numerous instances – correctly managed – can become elements of richness for the city. For this reason, the program become one of the tools to manage the difficulties and transform them in new opportunities for the city transformation.

It is not ordinary to reach this goal and only learning the lesson from the first practices, it is possible to sketch new scenarios for the future. What is important to consider are the motivations and the reasons that are behind these cases. They provide answers taking inspiration from what the society is expressing today. The strong link with people needs, experience and desires – in a sort of *user centered design* for the urban environment – is what allowed them to overcome difficulties where other approaches fail in terms of space uses and urban vitality. In particular, the program can be the way to materialized it and it represents a co-designed medium for the city experience where needs, knowledge and solutions are shared to reach together the best answer for the city space.





## From Government to Governance Three Program Cases in Milan

Tommaso Goisis, Andrea Minetto, Demetrio Scopelliti

### Introduction

Since the political change that took place in 2011 (with the election of a center-left mayor after twenty years of center-right governing), Milan has gone through a process of engagement of new subjects that were transformed into protagonists of the public life of the city. Not that the civil society of Milan has not been dynamic before, but the different key factor was how the City Government (*Comune di Milano*) started involving new categories of subjects in the making and storytelling of the city program.

Despite the presence of the EXPO Milan 2015, an event produced mostly by public stakeholders with a clear top-down approach, the last years have seen a significant shift from a model in which the City Government was directly the player which organizes few and distinctive events (usually connected with particular times of the year: summer, winter, carnival,...), to a new involving approach where multiple actors start promoting multiple initiatives/programs able to address public interest, public needs and public wishes, strongly supported and coordinated by the City Government.

In some hybrid cases, the role of the local government was at the same time being a program collector and a creator of program frames. Launching several calls for proposals addressed to citizens, associations, companies and structured purpose-groups, which were interested in reshaping the life of the city as common good, local government selected and clustered

hundreds of bottom-up events and initiative proposals, giving them a general meaning and a shared frame. The following cases are representative of that hybrid strategy, exemplifying three different kind of models: a distributed event, a program format, a collective urban planning.

### **Green City Milano 2015, 2016, 2017**

Based on some Berlin and London best practices, Milan has introduced in 2012 an innovative (inside the Italian administrative context) tool to facilitate private citizens and not-for-profit associations taking care of formerly abandoned public green areas. The goal was to stimulate the creation of community gardens, places where gardening would be a mean to improve at the same time local environments and social interactions between neighbors.

Once the administrative tool was available and ready to be used, the bottom-up demand to formally open community gardens (*giardini condivisi*) started to rise and between 2012 and 2015 more than ten community gardens were born in the city (e.g. Giardini Lea Garofalo, Isola Pepe Verde, Parco Segantini, etc). The City Government, seeing the great success of other diffused festivals recently promoted in Milan, like Piano City Milano and Book City Milano, decided to reinforce the gardening spontaneous proposals programming a three days event where those places and groups of citizens were exposed to the whole city, coordinated in a sort of informal network to increase the environmental issues awareness. Hence, we named it accordingly: Green City Milano (GCM).

Two main potentially critical factors were immediately clear. The first one was that gardening activities are more complex than temporary events: for example, while a piano concert program begins and ends in a few hours or few days, flowers, once planted, need water and care every day. The second potentially critical factor was that the gardening community – composed by strong and resilient personalities – was a little bit skeptical, suspecting some political influence, when the Municipality explained its will to coordinate their activities into an urban events program.

Therefore, after receiving the community initial feedbacks, the event was structured as follows:

- All the bottom-up proposals coming from associations engaged into actions of public gardening were accepted inside an event program, without any specific selection;

- In the months leading up to GCM, we, as the City Government, decided to invest some resources to provide the connection to the water network to those *historical* community gardens that has long demanded for it. As public resources were spent, this act endorsed the *public* value of their *private* activities (still on a public land);
- The call for proposals has not been launched in a traditional press conference, and we set up an urban gardeners meetup event, where more than half of the time was for an *open mic* session;
- We distributed aromatic plants to all the not-for-profit entities promoting an event within the Green City Milano program, to be planted in their public spaces.

The first GCM (October 2015) was a great success in terms of private entities participating (more than 100) and number of events composing the three days event (more than 300). The second edition (May 2016) confirmed the above-mentioned numbers and saw its major changes in deciding not to have anymore an event official headquarter in a public park, while investing more resources in communicating the whole program. The *public* therefore decided to step back even more. In the first two editions the public administration was supported by a private company that helped organizing and communicating the whole program, but in the third one (September 2017, with a new city mayor and administration) the knowledge acquired by the structured program personnel was indeed enough to autonomously run a successful program edition.

Summarizing GCM, the distinctive traits can be highlighted as the following:

- With the public administration progressive stepping back, the program is now considered a city community event creation. The bottom up request, coming from local associations, to setting up the third edition of GCM, was indeed a key element in facilitating the understanding of its importance by the new administration in 2017;
- The program aimed to increase the participation of citizens in actively taking care of urban public spaces, therefore being fully a part of a wider city policy;
- The inclusive and horizontal approach adopted to structure the program was the policy key in stimulating the creation of an informal network of different subjects taking care of public green areas.

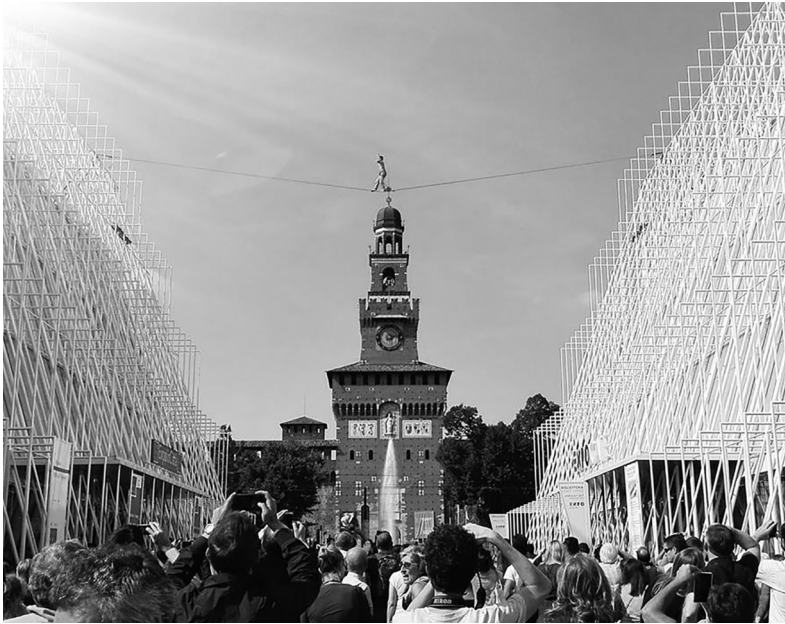
– Nowadays all the people and associations engaged in the program exchange (sharing tools, plants, time, consultancies) being *de facto* a relevant community of interest distributed in all the urban area.

### **The program strategy of *ExpoinCittà***

*ExpoinCittà* was born on the occasion of EXPO MILANO 2015 by the will of the Municipality and Chamber of Commerce of Milan as a great aggregator of the all the off-site activities distributed in the city. It has accompanied and integrated the offer of the Universal Exposition with a list of over 46,000 events with the participation of eleven million people from May to October 2015. It was the cultural and entertainment program platform of all the events happening in the city of Milan, offering all event organizers the opportunity to be part of a unique show schedule, allowing citizens, city users and tourists to identify all the initiatives that take place in the Milan metropolitan area.

The shows schedule was spread through online and offline channels, by means of communication channels that valorized the visibility and the collective participation of each event in an exponential way. It was a territorial marketing project that provided local and foreign entities with the objective of promoting the “Milano” brand and its rich cultural, relational and recreational proposition. It was also an organizational facilitation tool thanks to the collaboration with the event helpdesk of the Municipality of Milan (*Sportello Unico Eventi*) that has simplified and unified the authorization procedures connected to the organization of all events. It valorizes the locations thanks to the promotion and management of a virtual catalogue connecting the supply and demand for locations to facilitate and stimulate the organization of events. It was an agile and efficient platform (online and monthly printed), that aimed at networking, valorizing, and communicating the creative city production, and, also allowed the activation of new processes of bureaucratic simplification.

As a citizenship tool *ExpoinCittà* was a huge collective and inclusive program format started approximately two years before the semester of the Universal Exposition. That format tested a new innovative cultural program approach able to bring together tens of Milanese institutions and associations allowing the cultural vitality of the city to emerge with all of its strength in quality and quantity. *ExpoinCittà* worked with a principle of coopetition rather than competition, with respect to the promotional entities, and with support for the multidisciplinary character and the hybridization between arts and audiences throughout the city.



The *ExpoinCittà* format was also able to strengthen:

- The relationship with audiences: the Program was diffused in order to reach non-specialized audiences, offering a wide variety of choice regarding category, age and competence;
- The relationship with the territory: *ExpoinCittà* was an open format where the only possible way of functioning was the bottom-up content strategy;
- The role of the public institutions: in a context of lack of resources, the City of Milano (*Comune di Milano*) worked as a “gentle coordinator”, in order to facilitate and connect partners, subjects and artistic organizations in a transversal and wide-ranging manner;
- The relationship with sponsors: sponsors of the format were no longer simply donors, they were active promoters and creators of content, homogeneously amalgamated into the structure of the program.

One of the fundamental and most appreciated services from the range of facilities organized by *ExpoinCittà* was the above mentioned *Sportello Unico Eventi*. Located in the historical municipal building, it is the place where event the organizers could request all of the necessary authorizations for the realization of their events in the city of Milan. At the same time they received, for the first time, constant and personalized consultancy with dedicated continuous assistance for the entire organizational process of the event. In approximately one year of activity the *Sportello Unico Eventi* took care of more than five hundred events for the six months of *ExpoinCittà* for a total of over two thousand services offered by operators.

The distinctive trait of *ExpoinCittà* can be highlighted as the following:

- The choice not to emulate the EXPO top-down approach (still very successful for that kind of event) was a key factor in the vibe that the whole city felt around *ExpoinCittà*. The two offers were not in conflict; indeed, they’ve been really complementary in allowing both the public and the cultural operators to benefit from both;
- The program communication coordination avoided the overlapping of proposals, and allowed different operators that scheduled similar events in the same periods to talk together and eventually find common synergy;
- With the powerful communication strategy going along with the effective bureaucratic simplification offered by the *Sportello Unico Eventi*, operators did not feel being “used” by the public administration for some political reason, while being effectively helped in the whole process of cultural program production.

## Collecting ideas for the changing city

Nowadays in Milan, in terms of urban planning, the major challenges are two: the regeneration of the railway yards – the largest available brownfield opportunity areas within the city boundaries – and the update of the city plan (PGT) – the most important strategic and legal framework for urban development.

In 2016, in order to define the most inclusive program for the better reuse plan of the railway yards, the City Government decided to set up a strategic and massive public debate process. A wide range of institutional actors – the City Council and the Local Boroughs, the Railway Company (property of the land), the University system, the Architectural Association – and more than sixtyfive thousand citizens were involved in almost one hundred design thinking activities in less than six months. One of the most relevant was Dagli Scali, la nuova città (From Railway Yards, the New City), a three days city-workshop collecting more than two thousand professionals and citizens discussing about the future of *their* city. That sort of urban engaging utopia led to the definition of five possible scenarios finally designed by five well-known architectural studios (Stefano Boeri Associati, Cino Zucchi Associati, EMBT, Mecanoo, MAD) and has become the concrete basis for the further negotiations and declaration of the strategic city vision.

A similar inclusive and collaborative successful approach was implemented also to update the Milan City Plan (PGT). The City Government started by launching an open online survey, collecting more than five thousand questionnaires and comments about both the values of the existing plan and a first set of proposals.

Then, analyzing all the data collected and the emerged willing of being more aware about the plan, the City Government decided to organize the next initiative *Milano 2030. Idee per la città che cambia (Milan 2030. Ideas for the Changing City)*. In order to define a common way to select all the objectives, the key places and the most adapted instruments to program the regeneration of the future city, there were implemented a series of workshops together with hundreds of stakeholders, mixing experts and active citizens, representatives of institutions and technical officers, private investors and NGOs for thinking, designing and envisioning together. So, waiting for the physical long-term construction of the brick city, Milan was able to start building up an increasing common urban knowledge, a trust in the public government approach, sense of ownership, urban-care, relations and interconnections, integration of expertise and competencies.



Addressing the regeneration of the railway yards and the update of the city plan, the Milan City Government wanted to underline that all legal rules and technical parameters – such as: building density index, public standard, minimum and maximum surfaces, gross floor area, equalization (*perequazione*) – are “just” practical factors supporting a knowledge program towards a shared idea of better urban future.

Far from being just formal participatory events, these debates and co-creative experiences aimed to generate a better and new common goods awareness, a concrete way to facilitate the access of the people to a fundamental citizen right: co-designing the plan and the program which will define the city where they live.

### **Conclusions and challenges for the future**

The three above shown cases have in common some specific factors which made them successful. Firstly, a political leadership interested in, and able to balance their personal visibility with community collaboration; generate



a strong citizen trust, governing in a open leading approach; engaging new subjects in public programs empowering them without making them feel to be used by politics; educate the administrative personnel (that has been used to working with a more vertical “making things” approach) to start acting a horizontal “making things happen” approach. The second common factor is a very dynamic civil society interested in, and able to be proactive and start thinking in a new design way; taking care generously of their personal city; willing to follow one of the strongest evidences of the Milan economic and social context: the capacity to step forward. And last but not least, the three presented cases had a common program vision: the capability of the public administration and the hundreds of private communities and entities in coordinating and generating a distributed set of services for the common goods.

The three cases described clearly exemplify a possible transition from a Government approach to a Governance approach, from a mostly top-down concept of planning the city, and the life of the city, to an integrated and inclusive idea of shaping commonly the common goods.

How is this possible transition mostly related to a political condition? How is it, above all, an expression of a cultural and civil context? Can the “Milan Model” be applied in a different political, economic and social territory? How can this approach be scaled to the whole country, and what would be the effects?

Those questions remain open for anyone willing to collaborate providing answers. Still what we are learning every day is that in public institutions creativity is primarily a matter of connecting existing and potential energies, and planning often means framing and coordinating distributed capabilities, common proposals and coherent opportunities.

**“Nevertheless, combining Bottom-up approach and responsibility on final urban results remain mandatory for a public authority. So the Bottom-up opportunities and purposes should be from one side continuously negotiated but on the other side be addressed towards the Council Vision, which is itself continuously updated referring to the urban development”**

**(Chiara Bisconti)**

## Interview to Chiara Bisconti Former Council Member of Comune di Milano

Massimo Bruto Randone

In 2011-2016 Chiara Bisconti was Council Member of the Comune di Milano during an unique period of political and economical history of the city: the EXPOMilan 2015 and the *Libera Milano* policy, a Giuliano Pisapia new collaborative mayor administration.

### **Chiara, from your Council Member past experience, which is the relationship between Purposes and Realizations?**

I would say: *unbalanced*. But in a constructive way! From the simple and clear claim of the Giuliano Pisapia election campaign, *Libera Milano* (Free Milano), all our Council policy was primarily focused on collecting a wide range of the energies of citizens capabilities ideas and building up all the enabling conditions to make *those things* happen. For five years our policy was consciously focused on facing the urban complexity more allowing and enabling the urban stakeholder proposals then following the traditional managing process (goal > plan > assignment > control > payment). Obviously, to drive such open processes, without missing time and goal, we should have had a clear political and social Vision. As we had. Supported by a unique trust and relations with the city.

### **Are that Vision and Relationship, allowing and enabling urban energy, based on a Program attitude?**

I remember some, let us say *funny and domestic*, Council discussion against the boring city: "All we need is an engaging, attracting, collaborative, awake, creative city". So, all we needed was a tireless Program attitude. A

continuous capacity to open and fix, reopen and refix, our council agenda, in order to listen all the bottom up opportunities coming from Milano, and then designing and redesigning continuously the city *Program*. When I say *Program* with capital letter I mean (more than the internal road map process) the external activities planned in the city that make it pleasant, happy teeming of life.

**Which are the key conditions which make urban Program visible, active and full of social economical and behavioral consequences?**

In my experience the key enabling conditions are Space, Time and Stakeholder activation. All are relevant. Space depends on the availability of specific areas in the urban fabric or better, on a regeneration eye on some dismissed or abandoned or under-cared-for areas in the city. Time is a matter of inclusion, social inclusion in a wide sense, designing activities and engagement able to collect people *recreational time* to be spent in common programs. Stakeholders (probably the key factors which make the real difference), made by passionate, expert and ordinary people, which *just* want to become players in some specific urban commitment and game, should be selected, engaged and empowered. The role of the Council institution is all about sharing the vision, creating collaborative sessions together with all the active subjects referred to some specific opportunity, allowing defined action plans and supporting the whole implementation and upkeep process. Since passion and competencies are mostly already inside the civil society, we *only* have to call, coordinate and endorse them. I am thinking at the Skaters community engaged in co-designing the Skate Park at Gratosoglio, the Runner community co-designing the next year sport program or the Gardening community co-designing both the urban strategic green plan for Milano, at the big scale, and the *Giardini Condivisi* (Shared Garden) project, at the small scale. In my specific experience the Green City project is emblematic of a visible and tangible Urban Program which connect Space, Time and Stakeholder activation both in co-designing the unique plan and maintaining the tens of local gardens.

**You have talked about Green City. Was there a City Model that gave to Milano a strong and exciting Urban Program?**

Yes. During the Pisapia administration we created several *City Programs*: Piano City, Book City, Green City... We were able to transform singular happening in shared and named thematic editions. We created several cultural containers enabling distributed passions and expertise towards

increasing urban programs. Inside the City Model the council way of acting was the Step Back Policy, reducing the authorship in favour of partnership. *Scuole Aperte* (Open Schools) project, is another great example of urban rethinking program. Tens of spaces, already existing and well functioning all over Milano, are *just* kept open and available to community of students or citizens which propose reasonable use of those common neighbourhood spaces.

**The *City Model* seems to be (using a design concept) a Generative Project, a process in which it plans the pre-conditions not the final results. Generative projects and Step Back Policy presume a different leadership model...**

Yes, that was the *mantra* of our Council... opening our offices, leaving people come, debating community comments, disrupting the idea of an untouchable mayor or council member, introducing clearly the idea of a bottom-up approach to urban process. Nevertheless, combining the bottom-up approach and responsibility on final urban results remains mandatory for a public authority. So the bottom-up opportunities and purposes should be from one side continuously negotiated but on the other side be addressed towards the Council Vision, which is itself continuously updated referring to the urban development. This point is a matter of balance. For example, when I say *debating* community comments, I mean in a structured design process focused on empowering distributed capabilities able to take in care part of the city regeneration program. This participatory model is a little bit time consuming but it is really rich of astonishment and effectiveness.

**The last issue is about the role of time inside the Program Ecology.**

Well, in a large vision of the Program Ecology (as you call it inside the Urban Design Ecologies model), time is an enabling key factor. From one side our Step Back Policy presumes a relevant existence of citizen time availability, time free from work tasks, time to rethink, propose, negotiate, co-design, apply bottom-up ideas to taking care. From the other side the attractiveness of an Urban Program rests on three main time slots: design time, construction time, maintenance time. All slots are important, but maintenance time is crucial because represents how deep and strong and shared are the urban actions and events inside the social behaviors of the city.





## Afterwords

Imma Forino, Massimo Bruto Randone, Pierluigi Salvadeo

The essays presented here are characterized by an evident vocation for design. Although different in their style and references, they have the common aim of providing the architect with work tools capable of dealing with the complicated dynamics of the contemporary city. It is in fact no coincidence that these theoretical reflections emerged in parallel to an experimental project: AgriUrbana, a manifesto defined by its authors as a hybrid ecosystem, able to take care of a broader environment than the natural one. They are followed by reflections on the Four Ecologies – an erudite reference to the well-known text of Reyner Banham, to which this book owes something of a debt, but from which it then diverges, chipping away subtly at its foundations, essay after essay. Yet it is not a simple divergence, for the book of Banham has exercised an influence over this one in its description of the city as a heterogeneous and interconnected sequence of different questions that cannot, in appearance, really be compared with one another.

The Four Ecologies – despite referring to real territorial systems – are not described by Banham, as it would be natural to think, as a projection of the processes of birth, life and death of the city, seen as a sort of living organism with its own line of evolution, but as the interaction between geography, economics, climate, population shifts, technologies and culture. It is a complex tale that goes beyond a mere physical interpretation of space. As Anthony Vidler suggested in the introduction to a later edition of the book, Banham makes a conscious effort not just to describe the city of Los Angeles in a different way, but also and above all to rewrite a history of architecture with broader disciplinary boundaries and cultural horizons. As in an artificial ecology, the city described by Banham does not present

the appearance of a continuous narration. Rather it is characterized by leaps in logic, sometimes hard to understand owing to a frequent lack of linearity in the events. And, after all, it is not even necessary to “con the rear-view mirror for historical illumination” while driving along the freeway. Indeed, the “rest is to be visited at the reader’s choice or fancy, with that freedom of movement that is the prime symbolic attribute of the Angel City” (Banham 1971, 36). Words that seem in keeping with what this book and the architectural project described in it are trying to say. And yet, if the most extreme avant-gardes are destined in time to become past history, so too the Four Ecologies of Banham – however much projected into the future and related to open systems that cut across boundaries and are not shaped exclusively by the disciplinary history of architecture and city planning – seem today to have given way to an interpretation that, while made up of discontinuities, still seeks to find the demonstrative logic of each sequence described. After all, every event is consequent on another that is behind or next to it, and the ensuing account is almost Darwinian in its evolutionary character. So much so that Banham, while making reference to a new way of viewing reality in his description of Los Angeles, starts out from direct experience, even claiming to have learnt to drive in order to understand the city better. It is a transparent and demonstrative attitude, one which recognizes the consequentiality of events and the way they line up one after another. And again, it shows a continuity between the experience of design and that of its testing in the field.

It is with respect to this attitude so apparently full of certainties that the essays in this book diverge: less demonstrative and more evolutionist, they set out to investigate a swarm of ever-changing vibrations and collective interactions that prevent us from perceiving with clarity scenarios that once appeared limpid and bounded. In these texts the idea is accepted that constructed space brings into play its own capacities of persuasion, above and beyond the intentions of the design that has generated it. Thus the real categories of the Four Ecologies of Banham – beaches, plains, foothills, freeways – are transformed here into other measures of reality. So space is no longer seen as just conceived and planned, but also as something acted on, the fruit of what arises from strategies of use; the identities which inhabit places no longer represent solely a universal and shared sense, but are the aspiration and action of groups that are also sometimes restricted or even in conflict; policies, generally understood as guidelines imposed from above so that actions can take place, are reassessed as arenas of debate, collaboration and coordination between engaged stakeholders; programs do not appear as simple declarations, but are interpreted as

open participatory processes, able to generate planning skills and urban mutations. In its complexity and variety, the book tends to include rather than exclude, to describe spaces crammed with information even of minor significance, to accept ambiguities and overturnings of meaning and to favor open lines of reasoning able to undermine the logical and sequential systems of the traditional approach to urban planning.

The essays move uninhibitedly from the account of partial acts of consumption of space to the description of far-reaching urban agendas that accept confrontation as well as agreement. They speak of slow territories described by an inhabitant on a bicycle, but then we also find a city in turmoil with its new forms of augmented reality. The reassuring flavor of vegetation in the city appears alongside the network of unconventional places generated by the uncontrollable compulsions of the globalization. The project presented as an intentional act of modification of the territory is confronted with an idea of the city as open design environment. The psychological effects of space on people are compared with the unpredictability of their actions and the creative city with the fixity of urban space. The book itself can be regarded as an urban planning made up of essays, a kind of written city in which the intermittent consequentiality of the active and creative processes obliges us to rethink the relationship between plan and use, between the interpretative and inventive capacities of those who act in space and the ideas that shape all the more typical phases of design. It is a partial outgrowing of modernist planning which renounces the construction of definitive formal models in order to adhere to a more up-to-date principle of design; a principle by which open schemes of composition and subsystems acquire value and in which, as Rem Koolhaas argues in *Junkspace* (2001), design is no longer form, only proliferation.

Many of the essays in this book deal, from the different vantage points of their authors, with new practices of use of spaces and their partial permanent redesign as a process of vitalization of the identity of the contemporary urban environment. Other texts speak of osmotic relationships between people and institutions, with the latter turned from places for the preservation of the historical and documentary heritage into real or virtual spaces in which to experiment with the effects of an ever more active citizenship. Others still point out how today's city systematizes real and virtual and, at the same time, has become a place of social innovation, where cooperation between people represents the decisive creative and constitutive factor of urban space. And some, finally, speak of the city as at one and the same time a perfect physical, cultural and mental artifact. In

general, what is offered here is a sequence of questions, perhaps not easy to structure coherently, but that, from a panoramic perspective, expresses the possibility of a coexistence between different design ecologies, just as Banham had predicted, but whose real significance and developments he could not have foreseen at the time.

Serge Latouche (2012) argues that today, in the era of globalization, the limits have vanished: not so much the geographical ones as those on the possibilities of our actions. However, the paradox of our age is that the boundlessness of this action has in reality been accompanied by the appearance of an endless range of new epicenters to be connected with one another: geographical, political, cultural, physical, environmental, economic, cognitive, moral, etc. So what emerges is the idea of a design ecology of the urban environment, capable of integrating the concept of limit with that of epicenter and governing the processes of superimposition in the search for the qualitative, collaborative and relational value of the city. When all is said and done, this is the objective of the writings presented here: wide and complex paths of inquiry, able to describe new connections of meaning, behind which it is possible to glimpse broader hints of different visions of the city.

# Apparatus



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## Profiles of the authors

### **Francesca Berni**

Architect and PhD student at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies DASTU of Politecnico di Milano. Her research focuses on abandoned heritage in metropolitan contexts. After the classical diploma, she attended the School of Architecture in Roma Tre University, then she concluded her studies in Politecnico di Milano where she graduated in Architecture in 2015.

### **Marco Boffi**

PhD and Adjunct Professor of Psychology at the University of Milan. His research focuses on the relation between environment, individual wellbeing and collective quality of life. He is experienced in consulting for policy makers and enterprises.

### **Maurizio Carta**

PhD Architect and Full Professor of Urbanism and Regional Planning at the Department of Architecture of the University of Palermo. He is the Dean of the Polytechnic School of the University of Palermo. He is expert for the Unesco Creative Cities Network and senior expert in strategic planning, urban design and local development, drawing up several urban, landscape and strategic plans in Italy.

### **Veronica Ferrari**

Architect and PhD student at Politecnico di Milano. She is also a Teaching Assistant in Architectural Design Studios courses at the School of Architecture at Politecnico di Milano. She conducts research activities focused on the figure of the milanese architect Luigi Caccia Dominioni.

**Imma Forino**

PhD Architect and Full Professor of Interior Architecture at Politecnico di Milano. She is editor of the journal *Op. cit.* and of the book series *ii inclusive interiors*, and also member of the scientific committee of the journals *ARK* and *Res Mobilis*. For her book *Uffici: Interni arredi oggetti* (Einaudi 2011), she was awarded the Biella Letteratura e Industria Award for essays in 2012.

**Madalina Ghibusi**

Architect and PhD student at Politecnico di Milano. She conducts research activities based on the relations between the field of Architectural, Urban and Interior Design and the field of Environmental Psychology. She is also a Teaching Assistant in Interior Design Studios courses at the School of Architecture Urban Planning Construction Engineering of Politecnico di Milano.

**Tommaso Goisis**

Master in Public Policy at Bocconi University Milan & Lee Kwan School of Public Policy, Singapore. He is Policy Maker and Project Manager at the City of Milan since 2014 in Sports, Parks and Housing Policies Departments. He is also a RENA activist and coordinator of Senegol NGO.

**Paolo Inghilleri**

MD and Full Professor of Social Psychology at the Department of Cultural Heritage and Environment, University of Milan. His areas of research include the relationship between biological, cultural and psychological processes, environmental psychology, mental health.

**Timothy Jachna**

Professor, BArch Chicago, AADip London, PhD Melbourne. Associate Dean (Research), Leader, MDes (Urban Environments Design), HK PolyU School of Design. His research focus is on psycho-sociological aspects of design, construction and inhabitation of urban environments, particularly in East Asia.

**Federica Marchetti**

Architect and PhD student at Politecnico di Milano. She studied at the University of Roma Tre and at the Eindhoven University of Technology. She is also a Teaching Assistant in Architectural Design Studios courses (University of Roma Tre and University of Southern California) and in 2016 she co-founded the creative office Superficial Studio.

**Andrea Minetto**

Degree in Communication Science. He is Consultant at the City of Milan, Council of Culture, building up Festival, Special Projects, Innovative Format. He is also Professor in Show Management at Accademia Teatro alla Scala. He has been Project Manager and Performing Arts Producer for twenty years.

**Nicolò Ornaghi**

Architect. He studied at Politecnico di Milano and at AHO (The Oslo School for Architecture and Design). He worked in Milan for Salottobuono, in Oslo for Spacegroup and in Basel for Christ & Gantenbein. He wrote for magazines as *Abitare*, *AnfioneZero*, *Charta*, *Log*, *San Rocco*. He collaborates as Assistant Professor at Politecnico di Milano.

**Gianfranco Orsenigo**

Architect and PhD student at Politecnico di Milano. He collaborates on research and projects at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASU) of the same University and carries out professional activities within the Gruarchitetti design team.

**Gabriele Pasqui**

PhD in Territorial Public Policies and Full Professor in Urban and Regional Planning at Politecnico di Milano. He is Director of the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Politecnico di Milano. Among his research interests: urban policies and metropolitan governance, transformations of contemporary cities and the role of urban populations, philosophical description of planning practices.

**Nicola Rainisio**

PhD in Psychobiology. He is specialized in studying the relationship between psychological well-being and places, participating as a researcher in some international projects. Author of many international publications, he is also a consultant for public agencies and companies on environmental topics.

**Massimo Bruto Randone**

MSc Politecnico di Milano, PhD IUAV Venezia, Guest Professor at the Schools of Design of: The Hong Kong PolyU, Domus Academy Milano, POLI.design Milano, IED Milano. He founded CountDown, Connexine and SosDesign – profit and non-profit agencies for collaborative design programs – and CXINE (Corporate University Agency), run in collaboration with Italian international companies.

**Pierluigi Salvadeo**

PhD Architect and Associate Professor of Interior Architecture at Politecnico di Milano. He is the author of several publications and expert adviser to various international seminars of design and national and international conferences and congresses. As part of the architecture office Guidarini & Salvadeo he has won many national and international architecture awards.

**Demetrio Scopelliti**

Master in Architecture at Politecnico di Milano. He is Deputy Mayor Advisor for Urban Planning, Green infrastructure and Agriculture at the City of Milan (*Comune di Milano*) since 2016. As a consultant, he has been involved in a wide range of projects and studies concerning Urban Developments, with a focus on Walkable Environments and Green Infrastructures.

**Irina Suteu**

PhD Designer and Lecturer in Interaction Design at Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti in Milan. Her research focuses on social interaction in physical and virtual spaces, art practices in public spaces and communication in multicultural groups.



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projects for city environments  
**ECOLOGIES**

IDENTITY

# POLICY

# PROGRAM

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